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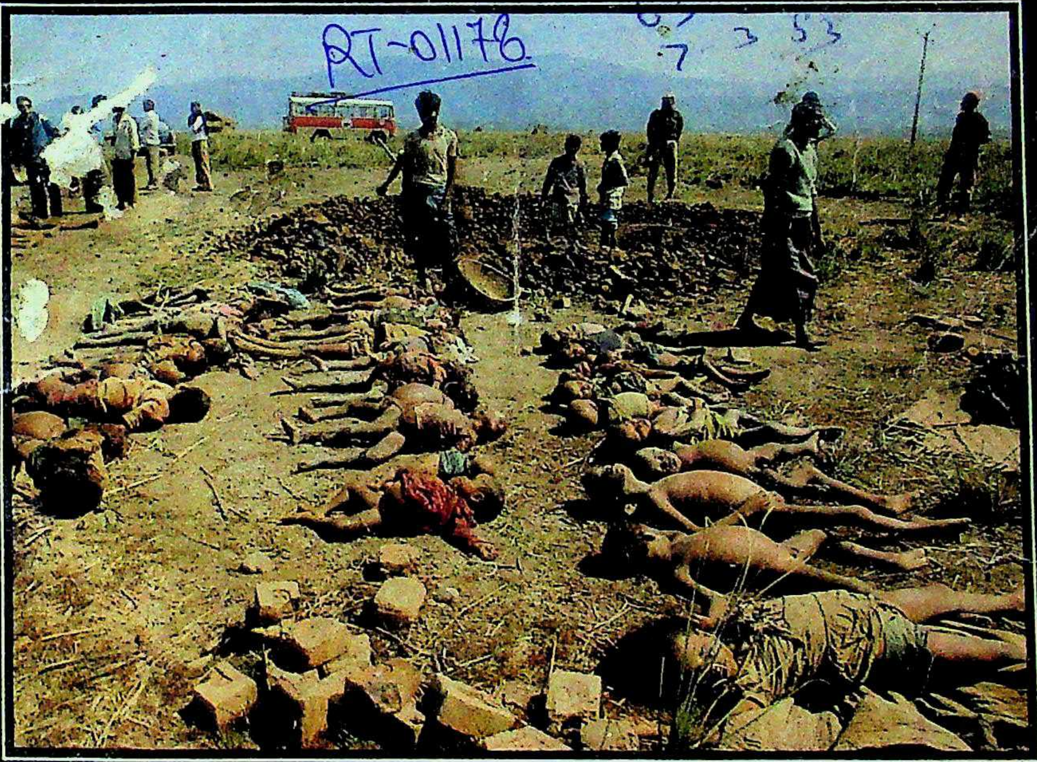

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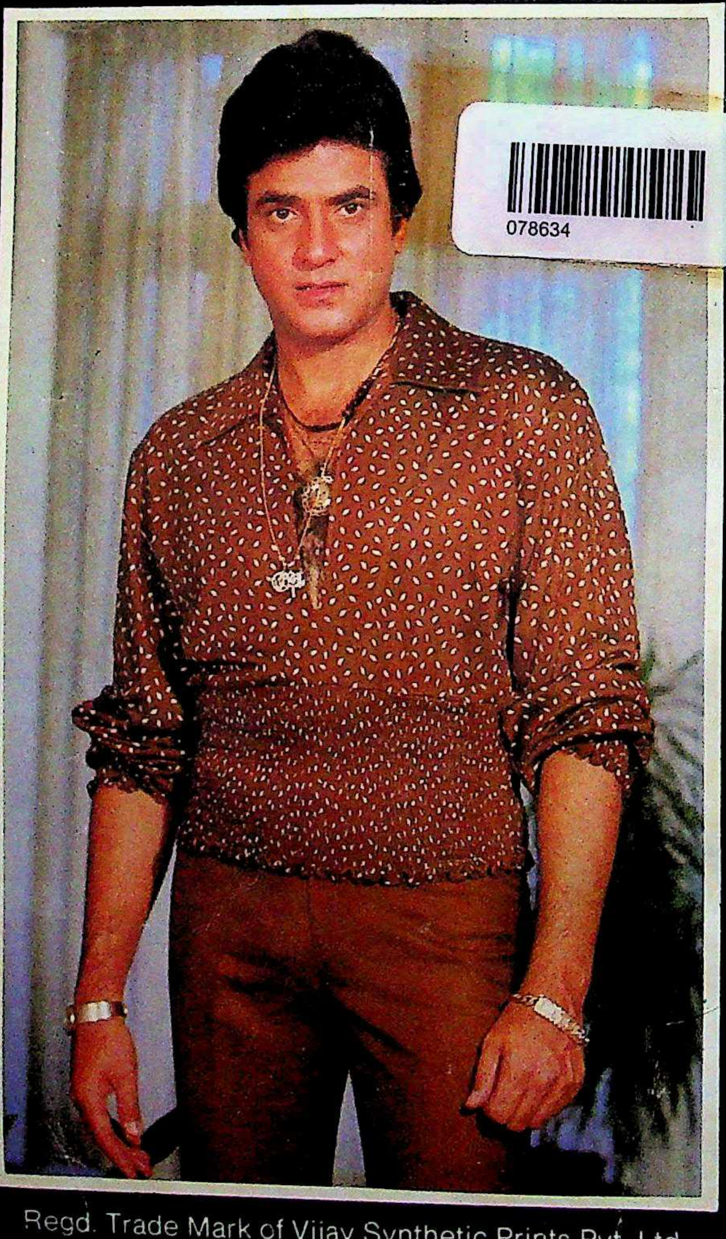

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A MAGAZINE'S *cover is its face. Last fortnight* INDIA TODAY *was suddenly confronted with the choice of putting one of two diametrically opposite kinds of stories on its cover. One was about peace and the other about human slaughter. Having featured Assam on its last cover, the magazine was well into preparing a cover story on the non-aligned summit when news of the Gohpur and Nellie massacres burst on a stunned nation. Although one consideration for putting a subject on the cover is its topicality for the forthcoming fortnight on which count the non-aligned summit qualified eminently, the unprecedented tragedy in Assam far outweighed this.*

However, the choice of cover illustration for Assam posed another, more difficult problem. It is part of the media's duty to show events for what they are, in all their brutality if necessary, for people have to be made aware of what happens around them. But it is also possible to shock people beyond reason, to repel rather than inform. It was for this reason that the cover illustration chosen for this issue was reduced in size, to convey something of the holocaust without offending the dignity of the dead or the sensibility of the reader. Photographer BHAWAN SINGH, *who spent a total of 18 days in the state last month, had stark photographs of the aftermath of the carnage which told their own terrifying story in sickening detail. And if the colour pictures carried inside are stomach-churning they are only a reflection of the barbarous brutality human beings can sink to under provocative circumstances.*

Bhawan Singh in Gauhati

T*HE ASSAM holocaust also provided the right moment to introduce a feature which has long been considered necessary to make* INDIA TODAY *a more complete magazine. So far it has not carried an editorial point of view in the belief that its stand on issues has been reflected through its choice of stories and its style of narration. While its reports must of necessity endeavour to be objective, the presence of an editorial has been increasingly felt to be a part of the magazine's logical evolution.*

S*OCIAL and cultural changes in a country usually happen gradually rather than in convulsions. And frequently being part of the process of change makes it even more difficult to perceive it. In order to capture some of this process another feature makes its first appearance with this issue. Titled 'The Changing Scene', the feature will attempt to reflect the wider changes in Indian society by focussing on representative personalities or institutions around whom they can be described.*

चन्दे से प्राप्त संख्या 63
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INDIA
TODAY
THE BURNING OF ASSAM

A BURNING ISSUE

The cover story "The Burning Of Assam" (February 28) has very explicitly analysed the tinderbox situation in that part of the country. By the time a solution is reached, if it is, the police and the agitators will have reduced Assam to ashes.

Mughalsarai *Binayendra Chowdhuri*

■ The person responsible for the violence is Mrs Gandhi. Obstinately she refused the help of the non-communist Opposition and did not amend the Constitution and then she went on to make provocative speeches. The death of every Assamese can be laid at her door.

Calcutta *Nirendra Nagar*

THE RAY PHENOMENON

It is fitting that in its effort to focus on all facets of Indian society INDIA TODAY put "The Genius Of Satyajit Ray" (February 15) on the cover. And Ray is not just a great artist—he is an event, a phenomenon and a legend.

New Delhi *Mukul Bihari Verma*

■ The cover story was an outstanding article on an outstanding man.

Sonepur *G.Purna Rao*

■ The article was absorbing but it would have been better if it had been written more dispassionately and less in awe.

Patna *Usha Puri*

■ Yet again Satyajit Ray has come to me through the media. I have never seen a film by Ray because I have never had the opportunity. I think the Government should compel distributors to take on the films of these talented people.

Dhanbad *Jnyani Ram Mahato*

■ Isn't it ironic that while Ray has bagged innumerable awards abroad and is accessible to audiences in the West most of us in India have never witnessed his genius.

Rengali Dam *Jaydip Mishra*

■ Even if Ray cannot be shown in
halls Doordarshan could feature hi
regularly so that they would availabl

Bombay *Umesh Kurg*

■ To ask Manmohan Desai,
Kumar and Ramesh Sippy for their o
of Ray is like asking Charan Singh a
Narain about Abraham Lincoln.

Lucknow *C.M.*

■ I think it was very unfair to ask
Kumar to comment on Satyajit Ray.
proved was the hollowness of the Bo
film maker's mind.

New Delhi *S. Muk*

■ I think it would have been more re
if you had asked more competent and
ted film makers for their opinion on
What sense can one expect to hear
people who have track records like
Naseeb and *Kranti*?

Bhosari *H.P. Rajop*

■ To preserve and cherish one's a
integrity against tremendous odds, no
ing in by making compromises to "plea
masses" is in itself the most splendid s
that an artist can achieve. What could
Kumar and his ilk know or appreci
that?

Madras *Sujatha Vijayarag*

■ The article makes some alleg
about some of my technical coll
tors—erstwhile and present—and
lationship with them which are too seri
ignore. Chidananda Dasgupta is quo
saying that "the two real talents in hi
unit, cameraman Subrata Mitra a
director Bansi Chandragupta, left
different stages because Ray preferred
everything himself." The truth is that
Subrata nor Bansi left me.

Ten of my first 13 films were
graphed by Subrata. The other thre
photographed by Soumendu Roy. Aft
13th film, *Nayak*, Subrata worked
period with James Ivory, during
again used Soumendu. Thereafter I
with Soumendu purely for reasons o
perament, never doubting that Subra
one of the ablest cinematographers
country.

Having been a professional art
amateur still photographer, I never h
problems with lenses or framing and
on my own judgement from the very fi
of shooting. Contrary to what the
says, I never "choose the lights". This
aspect of photography has always be
prerogative of the cameraman, the l
scheme being dictated by the needs
scene as I have explained to him.

Bansi Chandragupta was my closest end till the end. He left Calcutta re-ctantly around 1970 to settle in Bombay mply because working solely on my films ne a year) was not enough to sustain him. e was *not* happy working with other direc-rs who never told him what to do. He came ack to work with me on *Shatranj Ke Khilari* nd would have done so for *Ghare Baire* had e lived. Bansi was replaced by his assistant soke Bose. I have exactly the same working lationship with Asoke as I had with Bansi.

Although a fine artist himself, Bansi ver produced a single sketch for any of my ts at any time, insisting that I do it for yself. It thus became a habit with me which s persisted to his day. As with Bansi, so th Asoke, the preliminary research is done gether. Then I sketch out the sets with the eds of the scenes in mind. These are put to a workable shape by Asoke, who pro-eds to supervise their construction as meti-lously as possible. The selection of props is ain a joint effort.

Dulal Dutt, my editor, has been with me ce *Pather Panchali*. The writer suggests at it is I who sit at Moviola and Dulal erely works as a joiner. This is wholly true and does great injustice to a first-rate hnician. I *never* sit at the Moviola; Dulal es. Insofar as my films are largely 'cut in camera', Dulal has less freedom to play und with shots than some editors who are ddled with miles of incoherent footage and ked to bring some semblance of order into m. Dulal has perfect understanding of my entions and frequently comes with crea-e suggestions which are always seriously nsidered and often accepted.

I hope this will serve to demolish some yths which have persisted far too long, and hich your story set out to consolidate.

lcutta ***Satyajit Ray***

The object of the story, as it is with all DIA TODAY *personality covers, was to show tyajit Ray in all his diversity, as a man of ny parts. To do this, scores of people were erviewed; their points of view added to the hness of Ray's story. Inevitably, there were erpretations duly recorded in the story ich may not square with Ray's own personal ceptions, but we do not believe these detract any way from the accomplishments of eone who towers far above his peers in his d.*

—Editor

ORDY BATTLE

M. Karunanidhi has proved that he is e to match the bigotry of the most rdened racist ("Tongue Lashing", bruary 15). Does English seem to him like Dravidian language that he takes to it so ily? Even his name has a Sanskrit root—that should prove to him that Tamil and Sanskrit are linked.

Nowgong ***Pratap S. Saksena***

■ Why has the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam left off discoursing on religion and taken to making controversial statements? It is high time that he and his followers realise that it is only for 3 per cent of the Tamil population, the Brahmins, that Sanskrit has a hallowed position. For the rest of us Tamil is more than adequate.

Karaikudi ***G. Srinivasan***

UNPOPULAR MANDATE

The report on Assam ("Sounding Battle Stations", February 15) does justice to the disastrous situation. It is futile to hold elections against the wishes of the people and then call in the army to suppress popular anger. The North-east is aflame and the blame can be laid squarely at the door of the Centre.

Calcutta ***R.D. Sinha***

WELCOME NEWS

The news of a new contraceptive in the article "Injection of Hope", (February 15) is really good. Maybe this method will be able to control our burgeoning population which is projected to stand at one billion at the turn of the century.

Calcutta ***J. Mathew***

SOUND STEP

The Uttar Pradesh Government's decision to take over the Kashi Vishwanath temple is sound ("Stealing From The Gods", February 15). The temple administration is so absolutely corrupt that reform from within, would have been impossible.

Kanhangad ***Haresh Shenoy***

MISPLACED CREDIT

I found in "Marathon Man" (February 15) that the author had given credit to the efforts of Marxists towards the success of Janata Party chief Chandra Shekhar's *padayatra* but making no mention of the help given by the Congress(S). To all of us the efforts of the Congress(S) were very evident.

Palghat ***K. Radha Krishna Pillai***

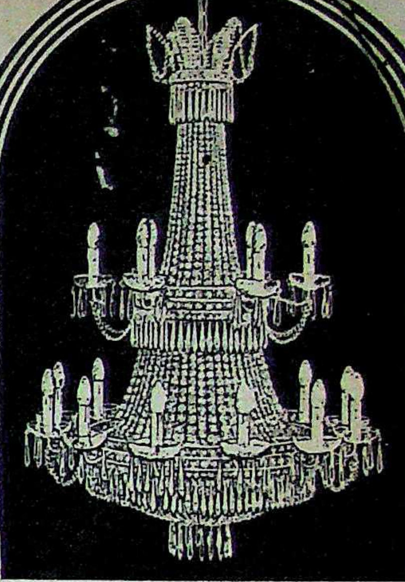
FINAL COUNT

I am a victim of the Padirikuppam fire which reduced 80 huts to ashes ("Brutal Reprisal", February 15). The number mentioned in the article was 40, which is wrong.

Anantapur ***K. Nagarajan***

CONSENSUS METHOD

The Central Government may soon have to pass a law making it mandatory that there are at least seven authors for every history book—a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sikh, a



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Christian, a Buddhist, a Jain and a Parsi ("A Textbook Case", February 15).

Calcutta *Aditya Himatsingka*

PRIMER FOR CHANGE

Having read the article "Warning Signals" (February 15) on the NCERT survey I, as a student of Standard XII found it to be totally accurate. The students produced by the present system are the perfect cramming machines. Could you not put this kind of story on the cover so that greater awareness is created and some kind of change is effected?

Bombay *Malay Jalundhwiala*

■ The NCERT could have saved itself the trouble of talking to a cross-section of students. The syllabi are ridiculous and the system of assessment is even more so. How can 12 years education be judged by a three-hour exam?

New Delhi *Prasanto Kumar Roy*

■ The article should serve as an eye-opener to parents. There is a tendency among parents to send children to school as early as possible so that they can get ahead with this mass-produced education. And as if this were not enough they are constantly pressured to stay ahead of the rest. What kind of a childhood is this?

Trivandrum *M.V. Venugopalan*

■ I read the article with mixed feelings. While it was heartening to note that the authorities are beginning to realise the quality of education being dished out, the hopelessness of this situation being rectified is depressing. Why doesn't INDIA TODAY put the principals of the capital's premier schools in the dock and question them on the basis of the NCERT finding and ascertain what they plan to do now? Until the authorities that run our schools realise the need for reform, nothing is likely to change.

Lucknow *Urvashi Sahni*

TAXING TIMES

"Star Billings" (February 15) was interesting. I was amused to read that Amitabh Bachchan's highest fee has been Rs 9 lakh. It seems that the industry extends make-believe to their incomes as well.

Patna *Sanjay Prakash*

■ The only way in which this scandalous tax evasion can be dealt with is if the Government nationalises the film industry and preferably in one fell swoop. Let the stars get a standard salary with taxes deducted at source. This should also go a long way in improving the low artistic standards of the industry.

Varanasi *S.S. Kabra*

MAKING A MOCKERY

The reference to Sikhs and Assame different nationals in "From Pillar To P (February 15) was in shocking tast makes mockery of India as a united na

Hazaribagh *Paresh K.*

MOVING PLIGHT

The photo feature on the "Widow Varanasi" (February 15) was extre touching. The text complemented the tures superbly.

Dombivili *V.G. Dha*

■ The root cause of these evils is illiteracy that is encouraged among wo If they were educated they could free th selves of these economic, social and relig bonds.

Chandigarh *Mukesh Bipin G*

■ We've come a long way from the da sati—now we just turn widows out of houses and let them fend for themselves way they can.

Kanpur *Niraj T*

FAIR COMMENTARY

Bishen Singh Bedi's report f Pakistan ("An All Round Thrashi February 15) was without bias. He has a fair account of what went wrong and

Hyderabad *Jayshree Gu*

■ If the Cricket Control Board conti making angry noises about Bedi's f comments on the team it would be a idea if he resigns and takes to full journalism. He can serve cricket better way.

Yamuna Nagar *Sanjeev*

■ With his remarks about the fate o Indian team in the West Indies Paki Captain Imran Khan has pulled cr down from its pedestal as a gentlem game.

Simla *Anuj To*

CORRECTIONS

In INDIA TODAY's cover story "T Burning of Assam" (February 28) picture of novelist Birendra Kum Bhattacharyya on page 13 was inad tantly transposed with that of Ab Wasid Ahmed on the same page. T error is regretted.

In the 'In Focus' column of the issue (February 28 the Mahendra Hills were wrongly described as bein Karnataka. They are, in fact, at the end of the Western Ghats and the sit the Indian Space Research Orga ation's proposed testing site is in Ta Nadu.

—Ed

SAM

A Bloody Price

INDIA TODAY
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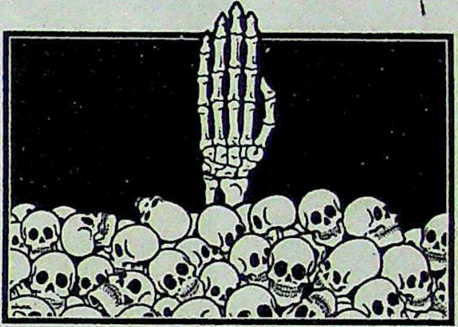
HE BLOOD of Assam stains the face India. The carnage last month, which conservative count has taken the lives of pre than 1,200, mostly women and child-, cannot be swept under the carpet. India ightly proud of the sanctity of its demotic tradition, and the Assam election has odied it too much to be ignored. Just as massacres at Shatila and Sabra in Leban aroused the anger of the world, so must cure names like Nellie and Gohpur be nded on India's conscience. Culpability not be evaded.



The Central Government is culpable because it persisted in ng ahead with the election even when it was clear that a od-bath was threatened. If Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Congress(I) Government in Delhi honestly felt that the elections e untenable, they had two clear options. As Mrs Gandhi knows y too well, the Constitution provides for the declaration of rgency which would override the need for elections. And, if e was ever a fit case for local emergency, legally tailored to ke it self-limiting, it was strife-torn Assam. But if this might use popular alarm, considering Mrs Gandhi's earlier experiments emergencies, the other obvious course was a constitutional endment to postpone the elections. There is no use arguing, as Gandhi is now doing, that the opposition parties refused to perate. There was nothing to stop the Central Government from ng to push an amendment through, and if it were lost, the ernment's intent would have been clear and its conscience clear.

Persisting with the election was wrong. The mistake was made ause the Government obviously believed it would be possible to ate the "extreme" element of the Assam agitators and win over silent majority which was believed to be tired of the agitation. re could be no greater tactical error, nor a more damaging eading of the popular mood in Assam.

Sharing the blame for this is the state administration which isted in the illusion that the problem in Assam was the work handful of trouble-makers, and that the presence of more than kh armed paramilitary troops would keep violence within ptable limits. As it turned out, when they weren't shooting at other, the armed guards were confined to polling booths, ng the countryside to ravaging mobs. The actual level of the nce shows up the myopic ignorance of an administration which completely cut off from the people it was supposed to govern.

Nor can the Election Commission escape being spattered by ain of blood that fell on Assam last month. The Constitution plicit in requiring elections to be demonstrably "free and fair". nditions weren't right to revise electoral rolls, it was manifestly that they weren't right to hold fair and free elections. True, ssed muted warnings up the proper channels, but if the commission was convinced that the election had taken a disastrous turn, it would have taken no more than a single public declaration that it was no longer possible to guarantee a free and fair election to toss the ball back into the Centre's lap.

THE GOVERNMENT has called for "a healing touch". If it is serious, it must start with itself and:

- ■ recognise that any election with a neglible turnout and so much blood-letting carries no moral force. There is no ground for the assumption of an unpopular ministry in Assam;
- ■ seal the border, deal with new refugees effectively and signal its determination to act by deporting aliens who entered India after March 25, 1971, start enumerating the state's foreigners and revise electoral rolls;
- ■ work towards resuming the aborted dialogue, not just with the students but with leaders of all communities whose future would be affected by a settlement of the migrants problem.

On their part, the leaders of the agitation must recognise that they too cannot escape the blame for the frenzied spilling of innocent blood. It is an absurdity to expect that lakhs of people can be uprooted from homes they have settled over the years and deported to other parts of the country. It is right that the Assamese should insist on a solution to the foreigners problems. It is wrong that they should insist on demands that are not practical. Negotiations are of necessity a process of give and take, and it is precisely because this process hasn't gone as far as it should that the lives of the people of Assam, whatever their creed or language, have been wantonly threatened and lost.

Doing the right thing will not be easy, but Assam is now beyond the pale of any but the most drastic solutions. It is a national failure of the entire establishment to recognise the mood of what is essentially a small segment of the country's population. It is a failure also to recognise emerging social forces, those of ethnic nationalism and regionalism which have completely bypassed the political administrative establishments.

More than anything else, Assam shows up the distortion of democracy at the hands of politicians who have lost touch with their electorates and are crassly twisting the democratic system for their own power hungry ends. It was a past crop of politicians who, by encouraging the inflow of illegal migrants and their enfranchisement, to win power that laid the seeds of the Assam problem. It is ironic that it is the hunger for power, manifested by the Centre's stubborn persistence with the elections, that led to last fortnight's butchery. Tempers may cool, but one thing is certain: the carnage won't be forgotten and those responsible won't be forgiven.

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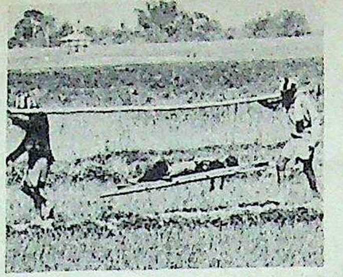
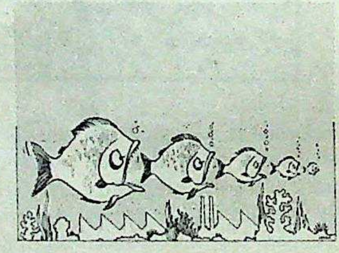
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



COVER STORY: With the death toll o bloody carnage in strife-torn Assam still the ascendance, the just-concluded assem elections which gave the Congress(I) the expected sweeping majority, has been a hollow victory. The anger and the rage continues as the Assamese persist over th demands to oust the immigrant populati A report on the large-scale massacres wi colour pictures and a post-election analy **Page 8**

SPECIAL REPORT: Next week, 97 heads of state or their representatives will assemble in New Delhi for the 7th Non Aligned Summit, making it the most high-powered conclave ever to be held. Perhaps no other meeting of the non-aligned club has been as crucial to the future of the movement and its direction as the New Delhi deliberations, at which India will assume leadership for the next three years. A report on the issue **Page 58**

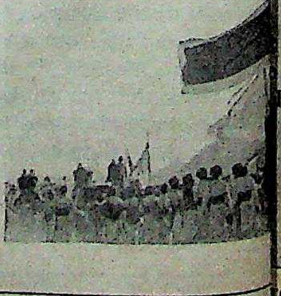


BUSINESS: In the '40s and '50s the In corporate sector depended mostly on expanding internally or promoting new industries as a means of growth. But la corporate groups have found a newer a faster way to expand and grow—by tal over the board of directors of existing companies. The move has ensured rapi diversification and growth in the sector report on the new phenomenon. **Page 9**

SPECIAL FEATURE: In spite of an international uproar over the promotion of breast milk substitutes and the draft code of the World Health Organisation (WHO) passed with an overwhelming majority just 20 months ago, India is showing no signs of restricting large-scale promotion of infant formula food. Manufacturers are continuing their aggressive campaigns and sales are booming, and assurances from the Government remain an eye-wash. **Page 134**

RELIGION: It has been exactly two y since the unfortunate conversions of Harijans to Islam took place in Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu. And the same place has become a battlegro of the faiths as Hindus are bent on regaining their lost flock from the clu of the Muslims. The Arya Samaj, who taken it upon themselves to stem the tide are propagating Hinduism. **Page**

CINEMA: It promises to be an extravaganza in the genre of the epic film *Gone With The Wind.* With a whoping budget of £13 million, *The Far Pavilions,* adapted to the screen from M.M. Kaye's bestseller novel of the same title, is being shot almost entirely in India, with a most of top international stars and with a backdrop of maharajas and opulent palaces. A report on the shooting. **Page 160.**



▸ I cannot be prime minister on my own because I am not the son of a prime minister at I can be made the prime minister tomorrow.... Everything is against me. In spite f that if I continue surviving in politics today, it is a miracle.

—*Chandra Shekhar in* Sunday

▸ I do not believe that you have to be corrupt to be in politics.

—*V.N. Gadgil, minister of state for communications in* Weekend Review

▸ Wherever you turn there is a system that works, or a system that is evolving. There only one threat to the system. And that is a government that works. Fortunately, our overnment does not work.

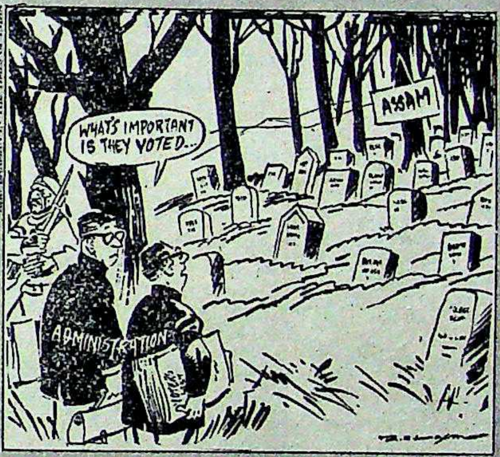
—*Rajinder Puri in* The Hindustan Times

▸ Most of those who become willing tools of their "political masters" do discover ventually that power and glory are as transient as those of the slave girls invited to the ltan's harem in the tales of the Arabian Nights.

—*Inder Malhotra in* The Times of India

▸ The Antulays and the Gundu Raos were not an aberration but the inevitable by-roducts of a political system which had come to put the highest value on vote-tching, regardless of principles.

—*K.R. Sunder Rajan in* The Illustrated Weekly of India


R.K. LAXMAN IN THE TIMES OF INDIA
ASSAM
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THEY VOTED...
ADMINISTRATION

▸ Indira Gandhi is no more the te-getter. She's just another cam-igner. And the charisma is ter-bly tarnished. But she carries on daunted.

Romesh Thapar in Economic and Political Weekly

▸ I'm 78, not 80. I've been a ngress worker for the last 63 ars.

Kamalapati Tripathi to newsmen in New Delhi

▸ With disproportionately large ms of money invested in the pital on one pretext or the other, elhi has become a pampered metropolis that bears little relation to national lity.

—*Editorial comment in* The Statesman

I know Indians will win (in West Indies)... but whether they will be West Indians just Indians I don't know.

—*Sunil Gavaskar in* Bombay

Though I'm married I'm a dirty old man and I love flirting.

—*Randhir Kapoor in* Star & Style

My life has been like a hurricane. It has left me rather breathless.

—*Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in* Society

Khushwant's (Singh) lechery was of the mildest order: he was a voyeur, he could nothing. Scotch was a palliative, but in the end even that failed to make up the loss.

—*Dhiren Bhagat in* The Sunday Observer

I really want to work in films that can contribute to social reform. My efforts in future would be to do something, however indirectly, for the downtrodden women ndia through my work.

—*Zeenat Aman in* Eve's Weekly

These days when the Congress(I) wins an election, it is news. It is unexpected.

—*T.V.R. Shenoy in* The Week

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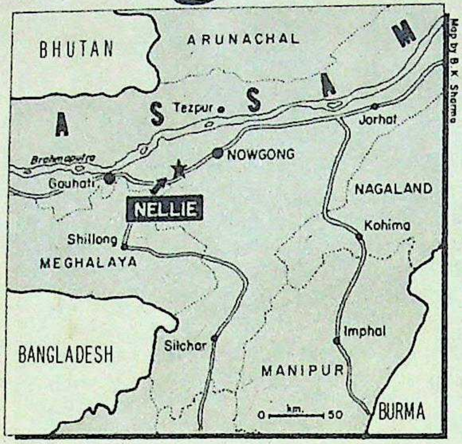
ASSAM

The Nellie Nightmare

Blood will have blood.
—*Macbeth*, William Shakespeare

ON THAT fateful Friday, the thought of death hovered over Nellie and the surrounding villages like a vulture. Ever since the poll announcement lit the fires under the ethnic and communal cauldron that is Assam, the 15,000-odd Muslims living in a cluster of a dozen villages between Jagi Road and Moregaon in Nowgong district, on the lush *char* areas on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, 45 km from Gauhati, knew that for the next month they would be living on a knife's edge.



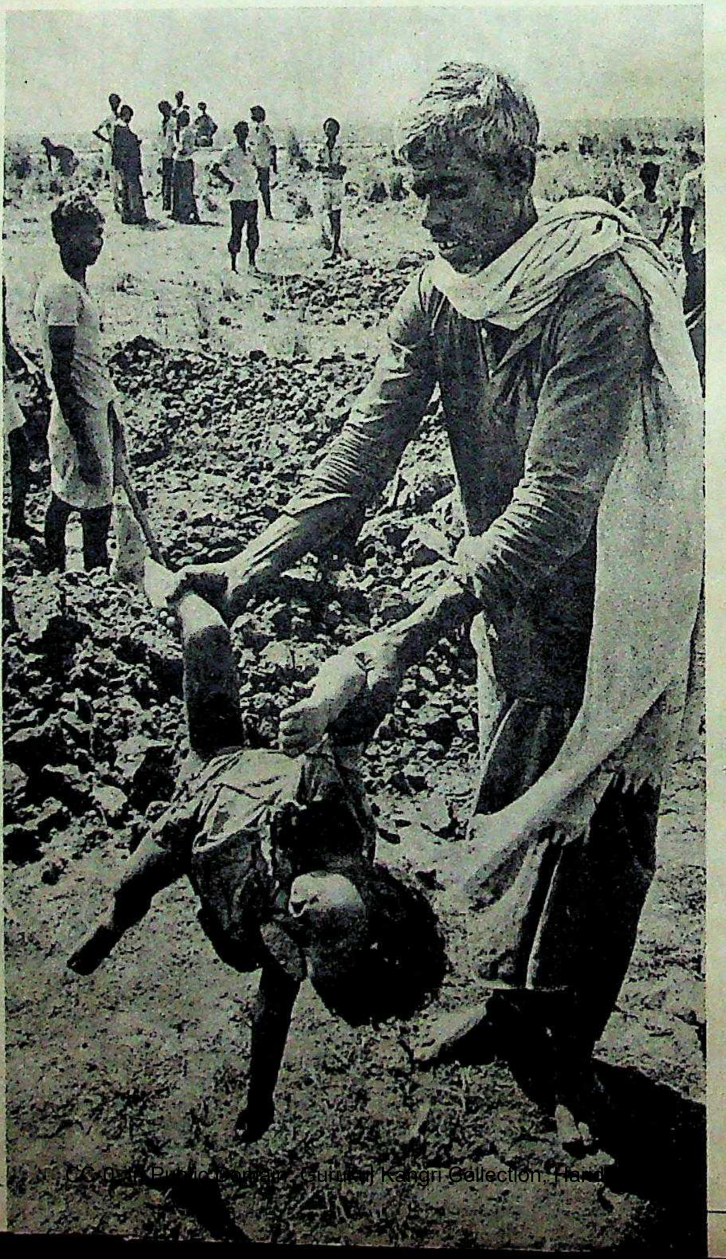
Almost all were Bengali Muslims who had crossed over from Mymensingh, now in Bangladesh, which made them prime targets for the Assamese. Further, they had made it clear that they would not respond to the poll boycott and would participate in the elections. What is more, raider gangs from the villages had been making forays across the river into the Mangaldoi areas of Darrang district to clash with Assamese there.

The stage was set for one of the most gruesome massacres in Indian history. The polls opened in Nellie on February 14, and immediately afterwards Assamese in the villages surrounding the Muslim pocket held meetings and announced that pro-election Muslims must be socially ostracised and anybody trading with them would be fined Rs 500.

Bloody Clashes: Meanwhile, news came of the slaughter at Gohpur, 133 km from Tezpur, the headquarters of Darrang district. There, the Boro tribals, supporters of the pro-poll Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), were enraged because of intimidation from the Assamese. Together with the volatile tea garden labour in the Tezpur sub-division, they resented having had vital bridges destroyed.

Nobody in Gohpur—or even Gauhati—is very clear how the Gohpur killing began on Feb 14. The rumour quickly spread that than 17 Assamese villages had been down by tribal hordes and more than people killed. Three days later, when parties finally began to scour the area, known that the Assamese had also hi 27 Boro villages attacked and at lea Boros killed by torch-wielding Assa The death toll on both sides did not a to more than 100.

Preliminary Killings: Gohpur, turned out, was only the prelude to a theme. Nellie and the surrounding v were tense with fear and hate on Feb 16 after five Lalung children were f dead in the Lahorigate near Nellie. The Lalung t are anti-poll and anti- they felt that the Muslim grants—most of them ca Assam in the '50s and had occupied prime land tilled by the Lalungs.



Matters were not h when three Muslim ch were found dead on the where the tribals' bodies been found. On the same February 17—the Musli Dharamtuli village, one Nellie cluster, were f prevented from voting second phase of the po the same time, there we ports of Muslim attac the Assamese-Hindu v of Dakchuki, Menapar Dhula in the Mangaldo across the river.

Howling Mob: F February 18. At around in the morning, a huge mo surrounded the village, with guns, spears, s 'daos', glinting in the m sun. Cries of "*Jai ai ahom* rallying slogan of the foreigner agitation that "Long Live Mother As rent the air. Nuruddin, a resident, relates what hap next: "We were all stan

A young victim of the sl (left), Assamese militant arms (top) and three of t dreds of corpses that litte paddies near Nelli

PICTURES BY BHAWAN S

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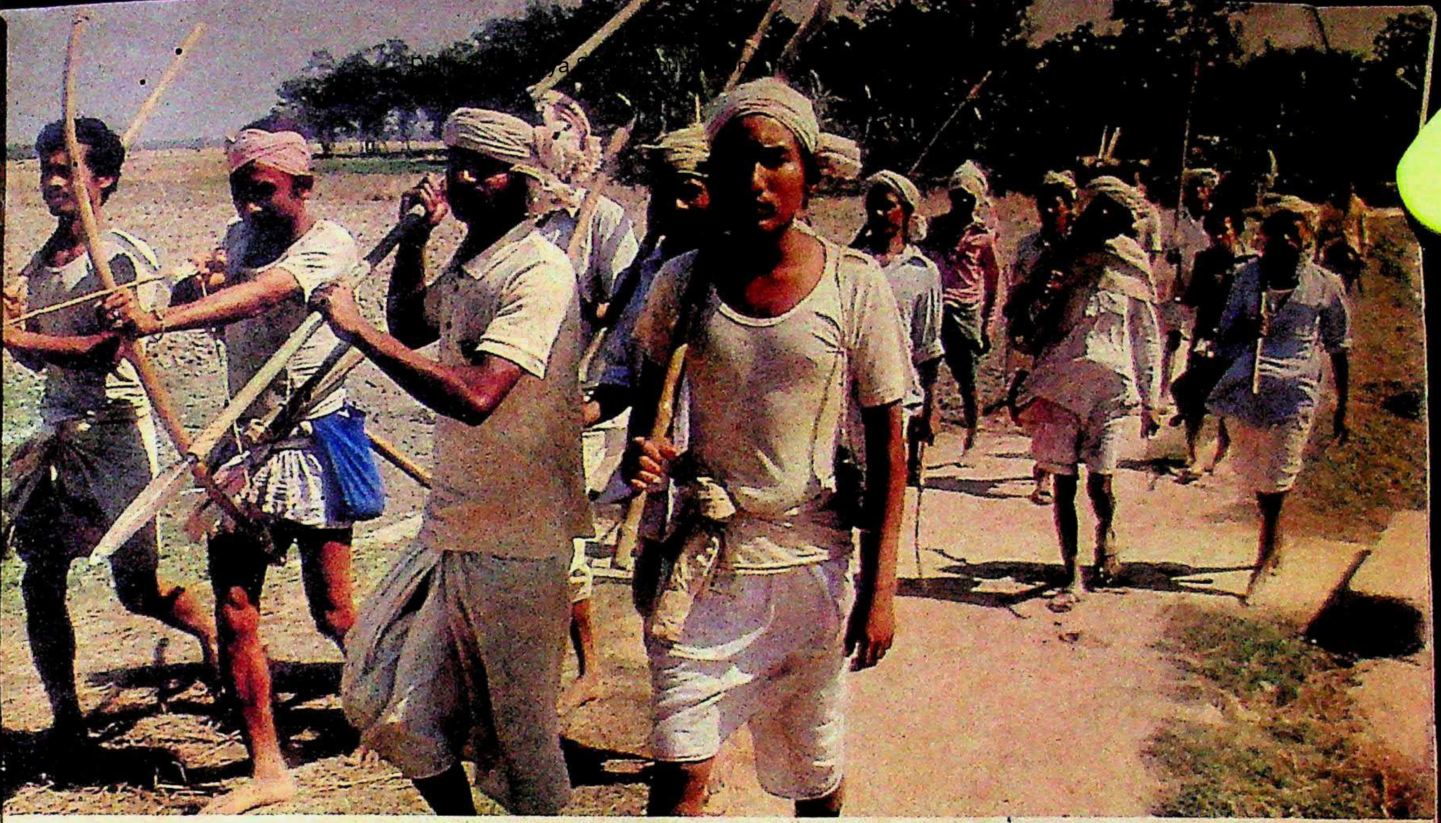
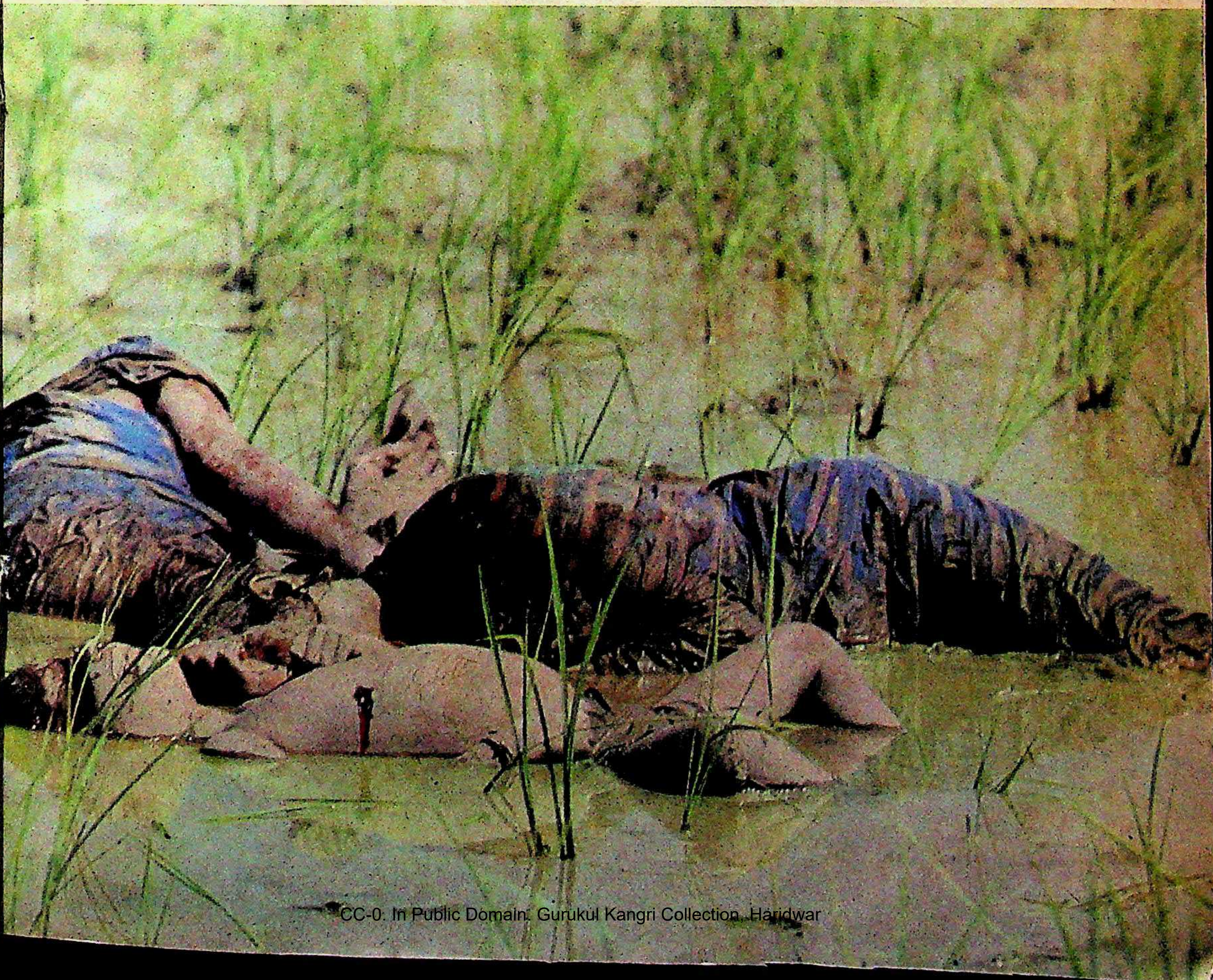
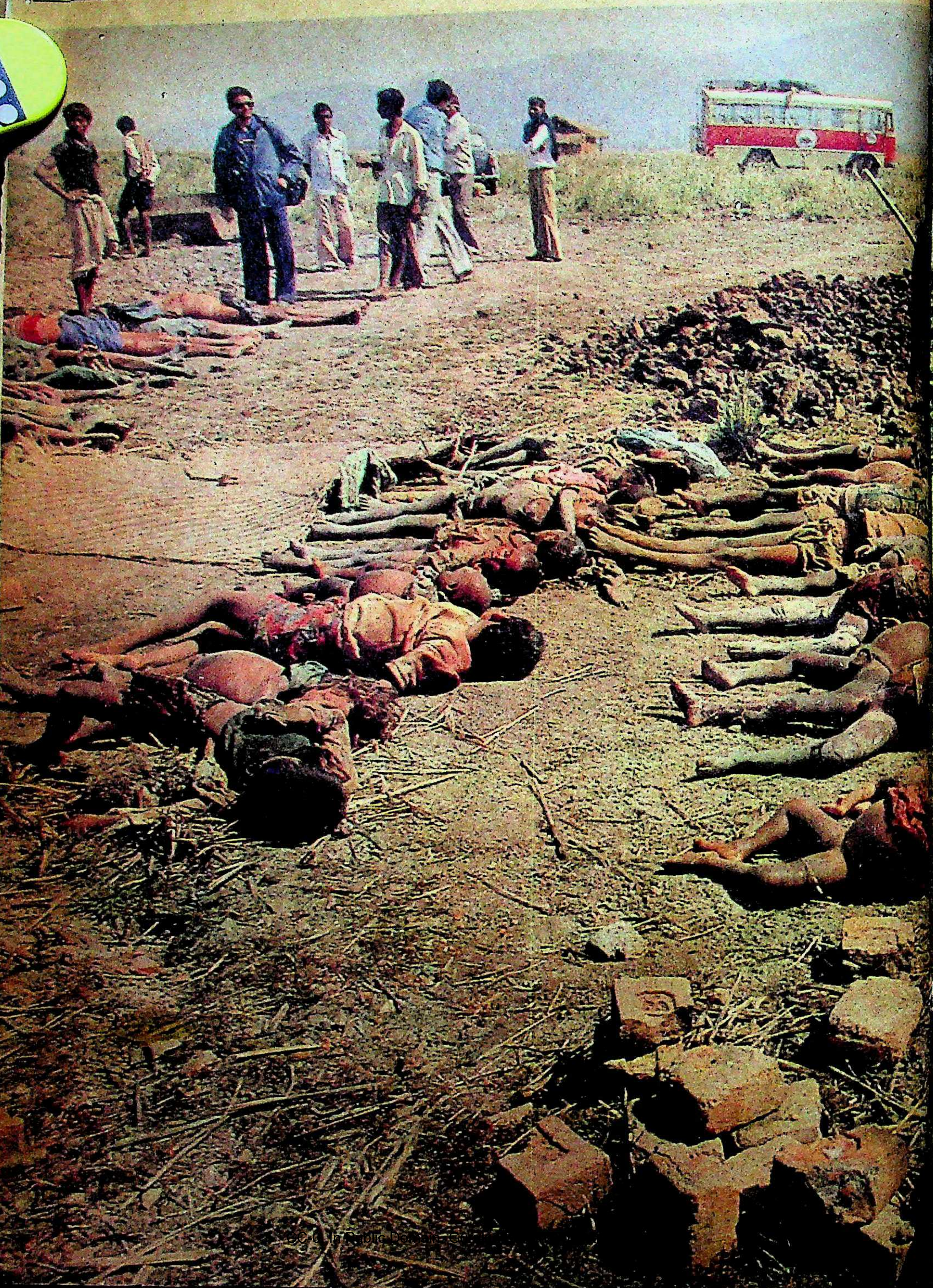
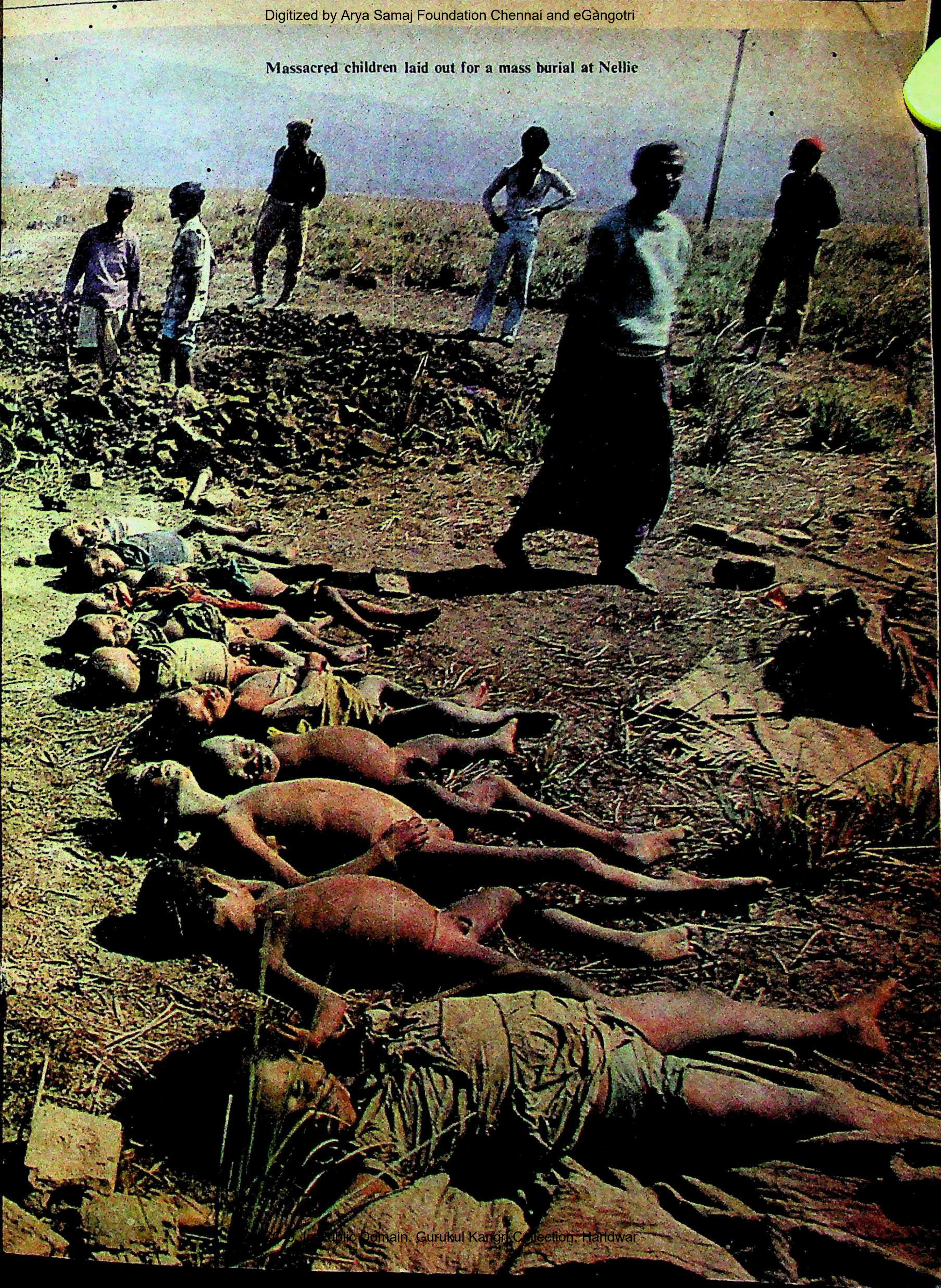


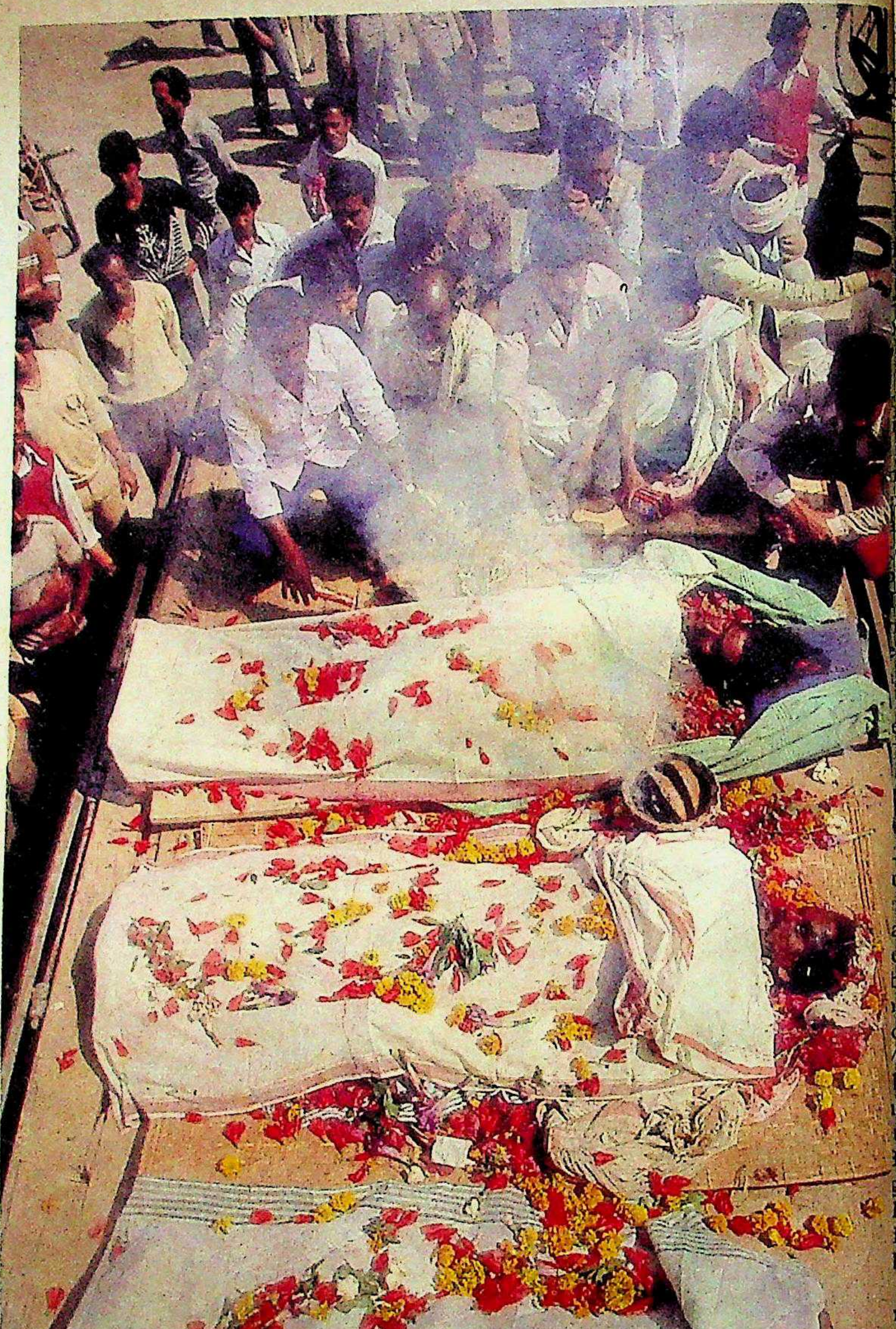






Massacred children laid out for a mass burial at Nellie

INDIRA
INDIRA MURDABAD
CRP GO BACK



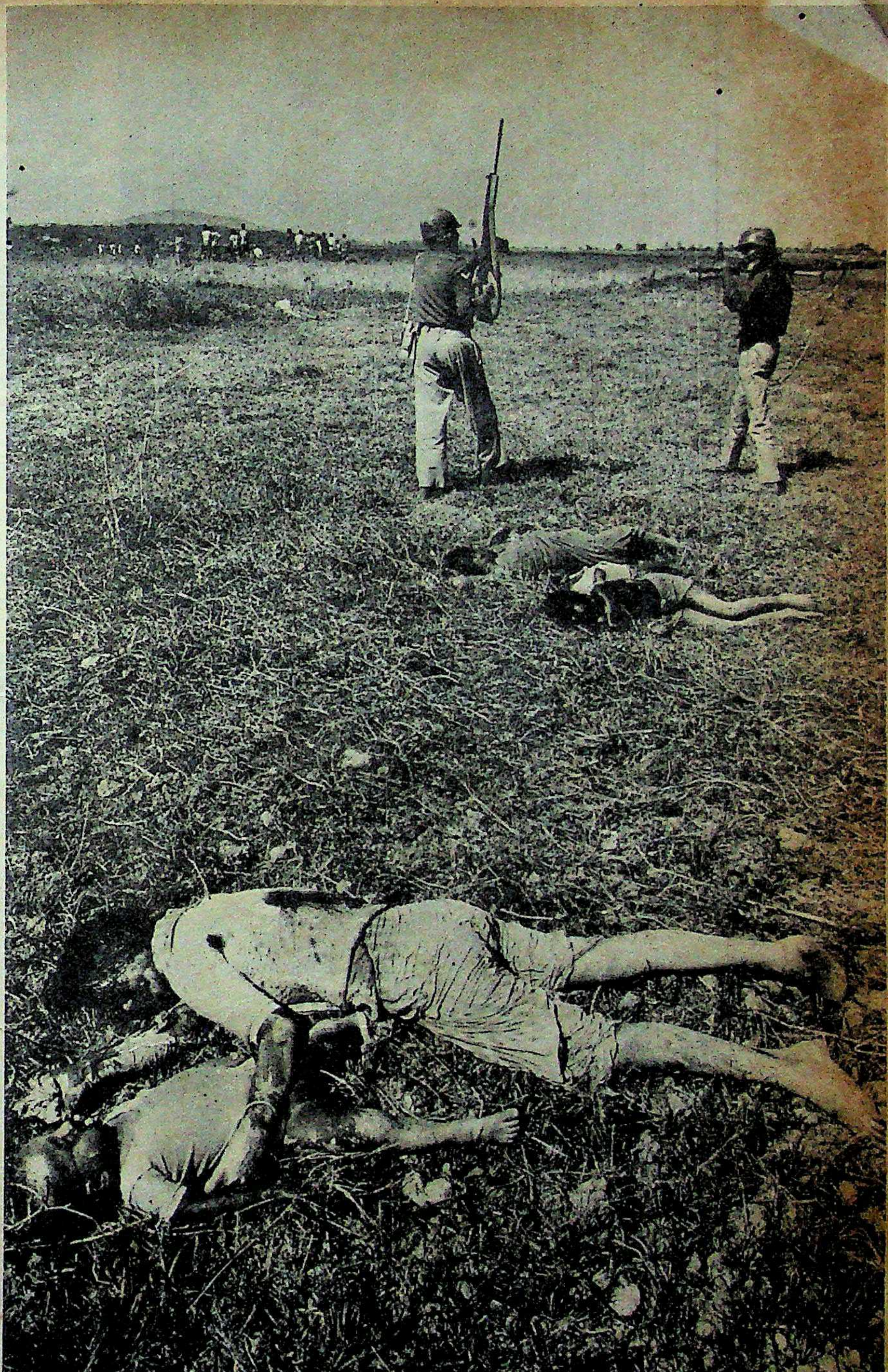
of our house, watching the gathering in the distance wondering what we should Suddenly we found the running towards us and as arted fleeing I fell down elt the running feet around Then there was fire and e and I do not know how I lay there."

Nuruddin was fortunate; scaped the murderous y of the mob, which was osed mostly of Lalung tri- though there were some and Boro tribals as well. igence sources later said the mob included some nese Hindus and Nepalis. med as if all the decades te and frustration were concentrated in the bloody urs that the killings went The slaughter and arson red mainly in a tiny delta en the small rivers Kopili, g and Demal. The land is marshy and the fleeing ers had no chance.

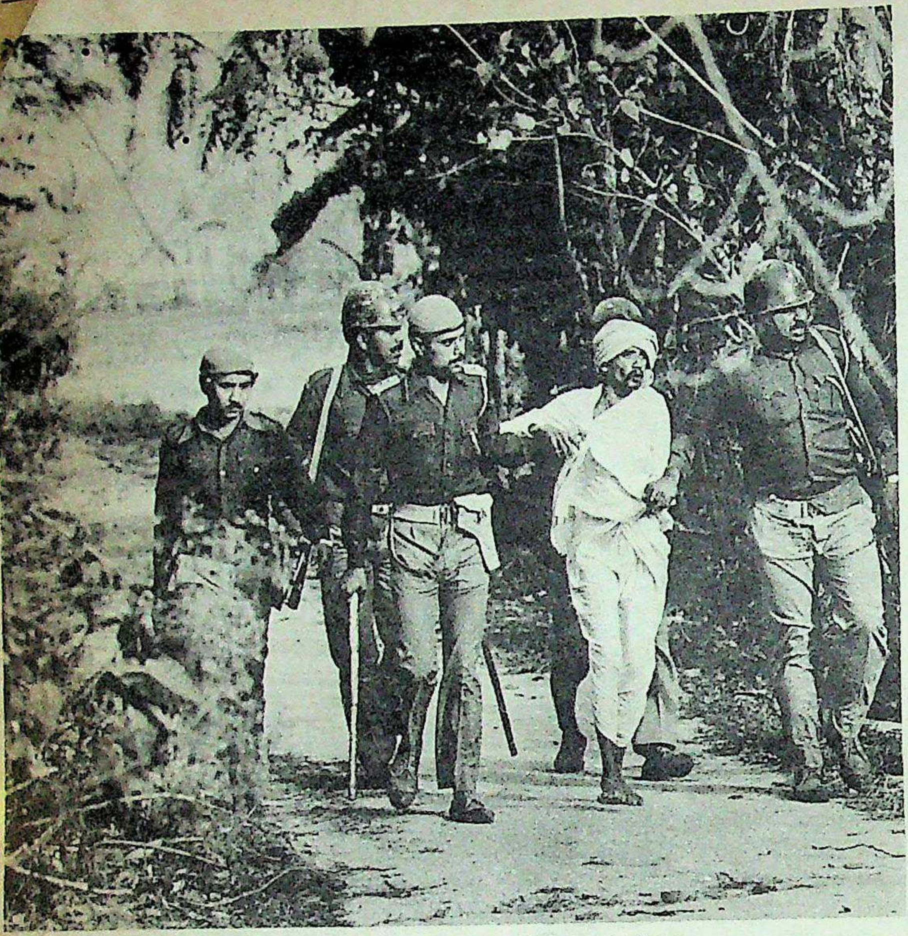
The reason why, as it was estimated, 80 per cent dead were women and en was that the men ran As the daos rose and fell monotonous precision, the n and children tumbled aps in the rice paddies. ers were still clutching babies—both slashed and ed about like hunks of on a butcher's slab.

Macabre Ploy: The Mus- llages in the area huddle er as in a ghetto. Soon, thers—Demal, Matipar- Borburi and Dharamtuli g them—were engulfed in lood-lust. The Muslims retreating towards the Bil, a huge stretch of and many succeeded in g over to the other side rning the bamboo bridge ope that this would keep ackers at bay. However, acabre cunning of the ers became immediately —the fugitives were ed upon by dao-wielding s from the rear and the s redoubled in fury.

ater, the survivors said



ndhi's effigy hangs from a tree (far left), the funeral of three Hindus killed in the violence and (above) CRPF men keep vigil over victims of the Nellie holocaust



CRPF men lead a suspect away for questioning

that they could not organise themselv the attack had been too swift and su However, it appeared that most of the were away and there seemed to be some in the report that they had crossed the to Mangaldoi to attack Assamese ments there. In fact, the army cordon the Muslims returning across the riv February 18, because they feared repri but this may have prevented many Mu from reaching their villages when the sl ter was going on.

Villagers from Nellie and the settlements, however, see a sinister des the fact that women and children bo brunt of the attack. Says Taherm Thakur: "It looks as if the attackers w to make sure of getting rid of the entir generation and also to ensure that n births took place."

Ruthless Attackers: The stories survivors are similar in evoking the brutality of February 18. Nurul, 16, fle his parents to the Demal Bil; the caught up with the running family and saw first his mother falling and th father, who was decapitated by one hundreds of daos flashing efficiently morning, afternoon and evening. Nu

Assamese women mourning their dead

nscious and that was probably why he spared the attackers' wrath.

Saifuddin, who had married barely a ago, says: "We were running with the rs when we got separated in the mêlée. I ped into a pond along with some others that is how we were saved." Nuruddin ow while the killings went on and then n the attackers lost their momentum a "I got up and ran towards some bushes hid there all night".

Anwar Huq was away when the attac- struck and when he returned the village been reduced to ashes. Says Huq: "I about like a madman searching for my ives. And suddenly under a tree I saw my r lying dead. Her neck had been slashed. er found that all 20 of my relatives had killed. I am the only member of my ly left alive."

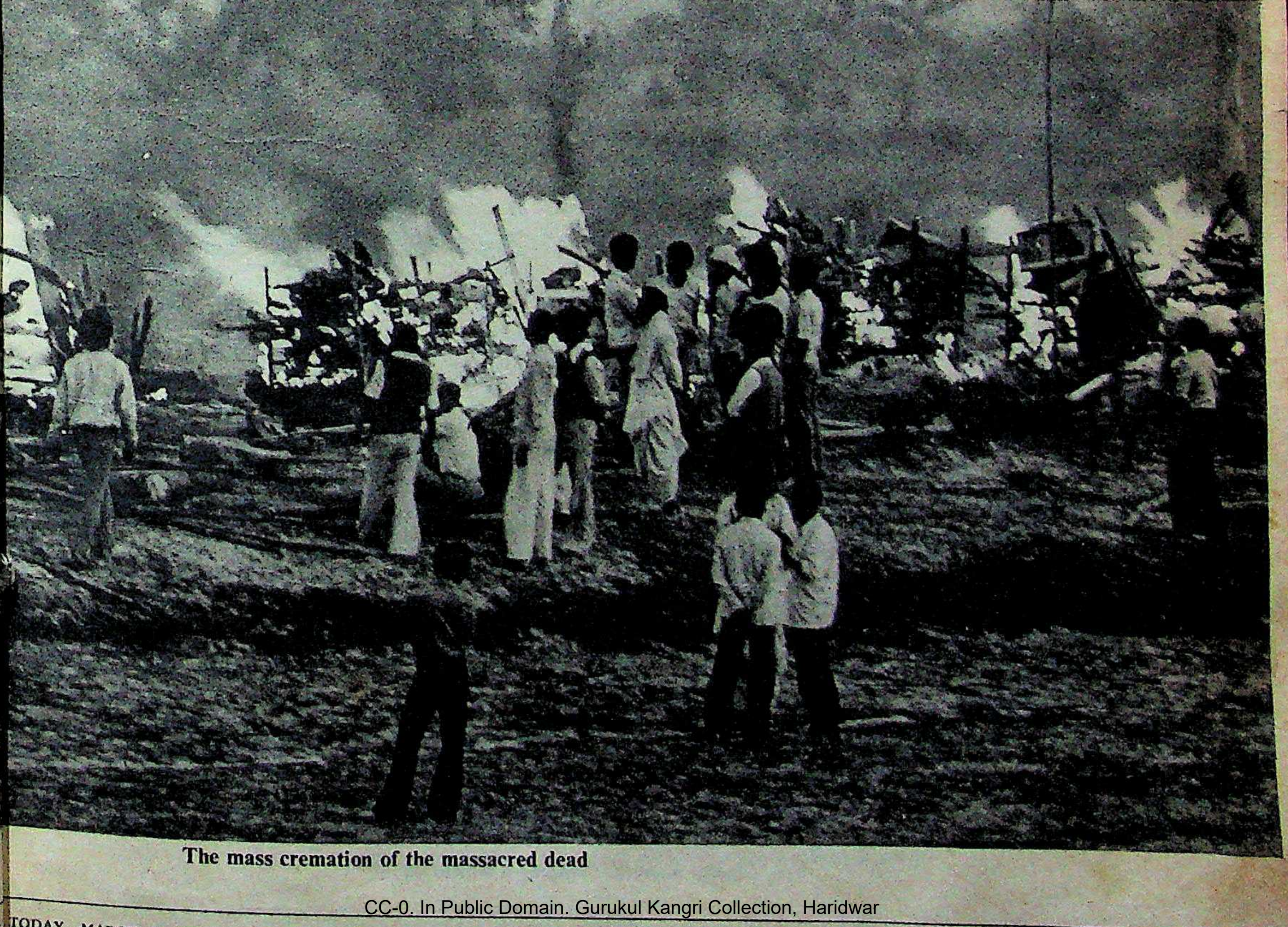
Refugee Camp: All of that Friday, the ngs and arson went on, and carried on the morning of Saturday. The para- ary forces that were deployed throug- Assam—Nowgong had been identified ne of the districts where there would be ble if elections were held—were nowhere ght. Two days after the massacre, the orities managed to set up an open air camp for the survivors in which 2,000 people huddled. Quite a few of them had managed to salvage, of all things, squawking chickens which were one source of food in the refugee camps. Said Manik Mia: "These birds were the only things we had and we just picked them up and ran for shelter."

Talking to the refugees, it appeared that the attack had been planned for quite some time. They said that "people from other places" were frequently seen coming to Assamese villages—Mukuria, Palaguri, Silbheta—and holding closed door meetings with AASU leaders. According to Abdul Hai of Demai village, many of the attackers were unknown faces but were led by known AASU boys who led them on shouting "*Jai ai ahom*" and "Death to the *mias*".

Even as three army columns moved into Nowgong district, the authorities began to count the dead. Conservative estimates were 600, but intelligence sources say that it will be at least 1,000. In addition, 10,000 were injured or left homeless. Camp inmates felt that many more have died besides those lying in the fields. Said Robi: "I have seen bodies being thrown into the Kopili river on the night after the raid." However, he could not identify the people tossing the corpses into the water. Curiously, when Mrs Gandhi visited the site on February 21, there was not a single body to be seen in the areas she visited.

Numbed Survivors: The refugees display a despairing resolve not to leave the region. Says Rajab Ali, who lost his mother and brother: "Where can we go?" Others are numbed by the inferno into which they were plunged last fortnight. Says Akram Chowdhury, one of those who emigrated to India from Mymensingh a long time ago: "We had been living in peace all these years. Now we are attacked by our neighbours who were friends only the other day."

Today, Nellie is a graveyard, with all the attendant sights, smells and sounds of death: the ghastly hulks of gutted houses, the stench of rotting flesh, the sound of relatives mourning their mutilated dead. For the survivors huddling over their meagre meals in the camps; protected by armed guards from the madness that prowls the valley; the past is a blood-stained nightmare; the present a daze; the future only uncertainty. Perhaps the only one to be sure of what the future will bring is the vulture. It knows how to wait; it is a patient bird. —JAGANNATH DUBASHI with SUMANTA SEN in Nellie



The mass cremation of the massacred dead

ASSAM

A State Ravaged

IT WAS beyond the ken of a civilised society, a blood-spattered vindication of a heartless government's sudden constitutional piety. The carnage began with a few deaths on February 2; during the next three weeks, it rose every day with dreadful ferocity: a dozen at Chamaria on the 12th, a hundred at Gohpur on the 14th, and then at least a thousand at Nellie on the 18th.

Amid the stench of rotting corpses wafting down the Brahmaputra valley, the Congress(I) in Assam won an overwhelming majority in the new Assembly. But the victory was Pyrrhic, and every legislator's path to his seat was trailed by a thickening stream of blood. Not since the passions of Partition had the nation seen such senseless death.

As the election week ground cruelly toward its finish, every community in Assam turned upon every other community. The Assamese, the tribals, and the immigrant Bengalis figured as both attackers and victims. The toll exacted would forever stain the election results—vast stretches of countryside mutilated by arson and violence, hundreds of villages ravaged by fire and turned into silent graveyards, a total of at least 1,500 people killed, and the firm flowering of hatred and blood-lust from the compost heap of botched history.

Virulent Hatred: Above all, Assam's image as a multi-cultural and secular state now lay shattered; there could be no solace for the lakhs of panic-stricken villagers who had fled their homes with whatever belongings they could collect. Worst of all, the state now seemed to be poised for a cathartic breakup along communal lines.

The carnage also changed—possibly forever—the very nature of the Assam problem. Until the elections the Assamese had been agitating against the existence of large numbers of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in their midst. Now, the Assamese, the Bengalis and the tribals were all separated by chasms of anger and virulent hatred. Overnight, a movement that had remained largely non-violent and secular for more than three years had been transformed by the elections into one of history's bloodiest confrontations—and the foreigners' issue was swept aside by the tide of blood that engulfed the state.

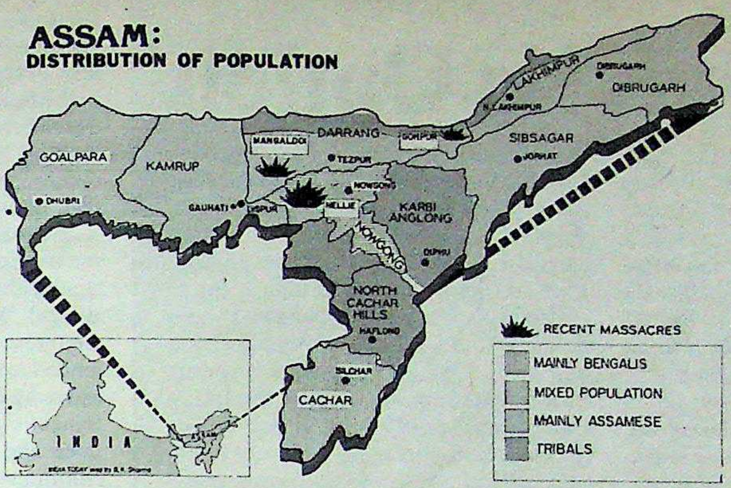
The results were clear. From a p line of civil disobedience and non-c ration, the agitation was now irrevo transformed into a violent movemen would not abjure direct and brutal a Such intransigence immediately pol the attitudes of the Bengalis and the ma of the tribals, who had been reso opposed to the agitation from the begi Every side of this bitter triangle now hard line in which reason and logic play no part.

Hawkish Stand: It was clear als the moderates in Assam had been pus the sidelines. The entire pre-election st of the agitation was decided by a hawks within the All Assam Students (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sa Parishad (AAGSP). Most ominous of al ever, was the sudden awakening to f of sections that had earlier lain do chiefly the tribal population.

Until now, the tribals had been periphery of Assam's problem; but th tion, and their own increasing is within the rapidly polarising society them had forced them into a new mil The agitation itself had succeed

PICTURES BY BHAWAN SINGH

Mrs Gandhi at Nellie: reaping a whirlwind


ASSAM:
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N. LAKHIMPUR
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DIBRUGARH
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INDIA
ASSAM
INDIA TODAY map by B.K. Sharma
RECENT MASSACRES
MAINLY BENGALIS
MIXED POPULATION
MAINLY ASSAMESE
TRIBALS

ging the tribals' long-fester- esentmént about shrinking and poor economic deve- ent into sharper focus— while the Assamese percei- the agitation as vital for survival, the tribals on the hand felt that their own val within the Assamese ext was in jeopardy.

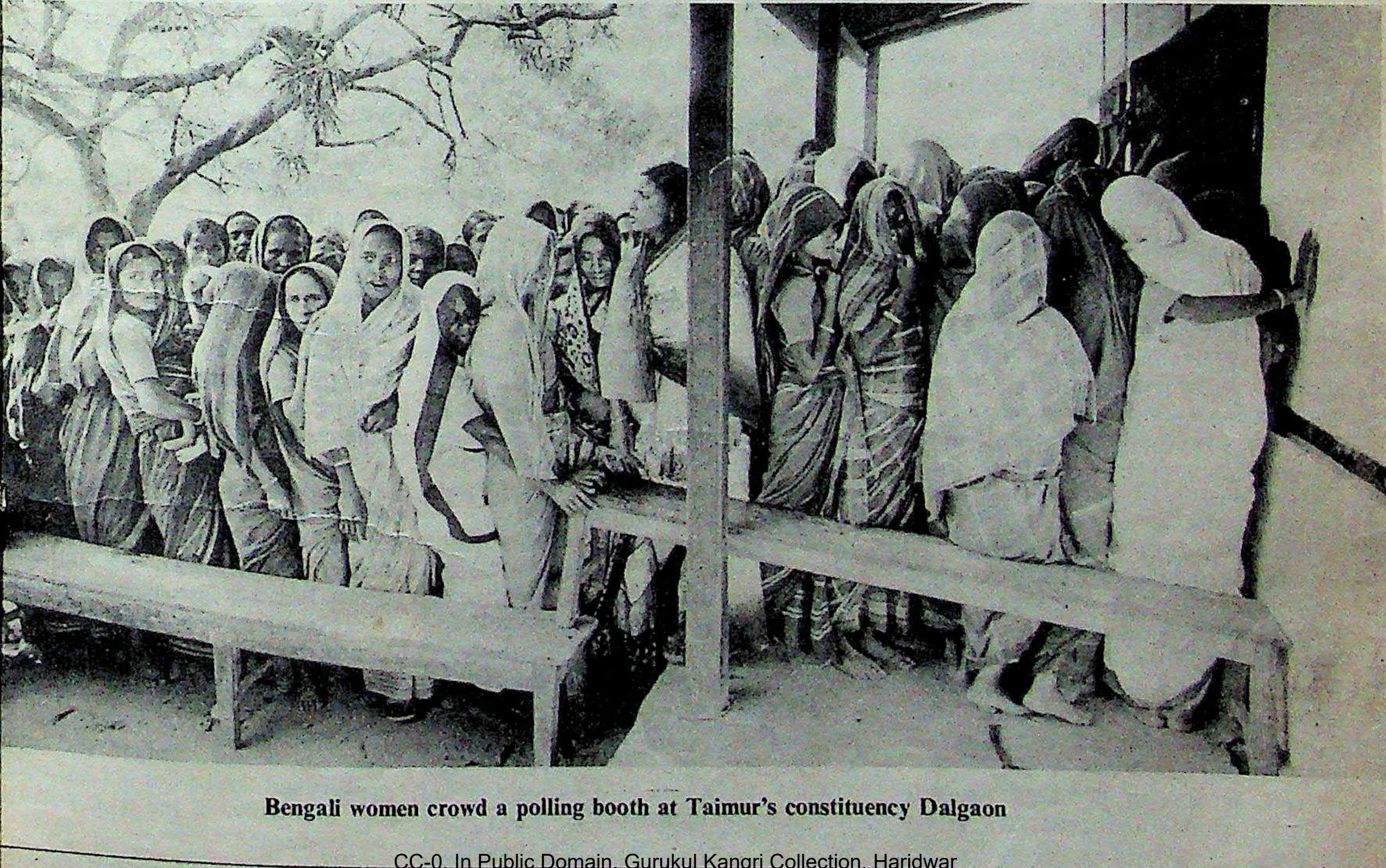
Suddenly, therefore, the of contention was no er the illegal immigrant, even the growing enmity een the Assamese and the ali. The tribal outrages at pur and Nellie introduced a and volatile element, and esulting chemical reaction d not but have led to a cataclysmic ex- on.

Social Contradictions: Gohpur and e also brought out the contradictions n Assamese tribal society, which had now been lumped together as a homo- ous unit. At Gohpur, the Boro tribals attacked Assamese villages were in ur of the elections, and owed allegiance he Plains Tribals Council of Assam), which has all along been fighting for nsolidation of the tribal identity, politi- and territorially. But at Nellie, the ng tribals who slaughtered immigrant galis were opposed to the elections—and their anger stemmed more from the Bengalis' steady encroachments upon what had traditionally been tribal tracts along the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

Where the Government miscalculated the most was in assuming that three years of the agitation had drained support for the movement, in assuming that prolonged negotiations would ultimately wear out the militancy of the students. Another mistake was to believe that the agitation was restricted to the urban Assamese elite. Said AASU's acting president Nurul Hussain: "The violence has been created by government agents. Now the agitation has become a people's movement in the real sense. It no longer depends on specific leadership; nor do I think our leaders can be categorised. Now the people of Assam will no longer tolerate the Government's deviousness."

Added Satananda Deka, member of the Mangaldoi District Students Union: "Study the violence closely and you will see how it erupted after Mrs Gandhi's visit to the state. By inciting ethnic clashes, the Government wanted to divert our attention from our resolve to thwart the elections. It is wrong to say that the movement has turned communal. There are Hindus and Muslims in both the Assamese and Bangladeshi ranks. The Government also thought that we had no reach in the countryside, that the villagers could be bought with promises. The success of the anti-election movement shows how strong our hold is in the countryside, and if the Government thinks it knows exactly how we think, let me tell you we know much more intimately how the Government thinks and works, and we can swiftly and effectively counteract its plans."

Growing Alienation: If the elections were to be taken as a referendum on the Assamese-Bengali schism, they brought out the



Bengali women crowd a polling booth at Taimur's constituency Dalgaon

R.K. TRIVEDI

"There Was No Option"

RAM KRISHNA Trivedi, 62, took over as the chief election commissioner in June 1982. He has attracted nation-wide criticism for having decided to go ahead with the Assam elections. In an exclusive hour-long interview with INDIA TODAY*'s* CHAITANYA KALBAG *in his office at Nirvachan Sadan on February 23, Trivedi explained his fateful decision. Excerpts:*

On avoiding the elections: There was no option but to hold the elections under the existing provisions of the Constitution. The only alternatives could have been if an amendment had been passed to Article 356 to extend President's rule, or an emergency had been declared in Assam under Article 356(5). Even in case emergency had been declared, Parliament would have had to approve of it, and the Election Commission would have had to certify that the continuance of President's rule was necessary.

On constitutional deadlines: I had four compelling deadlines before me—on January 6 the Central Government sent a communication to the commission saying it proposed to revoke President's rule by February 28, thereby implying that the commission should take steps to hold elections before that date; constitutionally, one year of President's rule expired on March 18, after which there would have been a crisis; under Article 172(1), the life of an assembly, from the day it is first convened, cannot extend beyond five years, and this five-year period in Assam's case expired on March 21; finally, beyond March 31, if there was no elected government in Assam, the state or Central Government could not have authorised any expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

On the Garhwal precedent: A lot of criticism has been levelled, saying that the commission had earlier countermanded the Garhwal Lok Sabha by-election because of induction of outside police and voter intimidation. But people have not understood the nuances. Garhwal was a by-election to the Lok Sabha, and the life of the Lok Sabha extends until January 8, 1985. If I had similar leeway in Assam I would have had no hesitation in postponing the elections. The commission has repeatedly stressed that conditions in Assam were not ideal for elections.

On revision of the 1979 electoral rolls: The assumption is that by revising the electoral rolls the Election Commission would have solved the foreigners problem. I will respectfully submit that this is not correct. Revision of rolls is carried out by electoral registration officers (ERO) whose rank is equivalent to that of a naib tehsildar. The ERO cannot decide who a foreigner is—that question has to be decided by the appropriate tribunals or authorities under the Indian Citizenship Act 1955, or the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act 1950, or the Indian Passport Act 1920. Secondly, the commission had only seven weeks between January 6 and February 28 in which to hold elections; for an intensive revision of electoral rolls at least six to eight months are needed; even a summary revision takes at least six weeks. In Assam even a summary revision would have taken three or four months. But this does not mean that normal revision should not have taken place. In fact, with February 28 looming over me, I ordered that all polling would have to end, even if repolling in some places was required, latest by February 21 to enable constituting the Assembly by February 28.

Trivedi: difficult conditions

On existing laws: I think the crux in Assam is that the agitators do not merely want an enumeration of the foreigners—they want a redefinition of the term 'citizen'. In addition, with regard to a situation like that in the state during the elections, nowhere else in the last 35 years has such a crisis arisen. Many things are left unspelt; there should be provision for such emergencies. If necessary later, therefore, the commission will press for a reference from the President to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution on these issues.

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total alienation of the Bengalis, too, fr
Assamese mainstream. In 1980, the B
area of Cachar was the only in Assam t
in the Lok Sabha elections. This time t
overwhelming turnout of Bengali vot
high as 80 per cent in Cachar) showe
determined the Bengalis were to prote
own interests politically.

Obviously, they are interests no g
ment can ignore, but there was a
significant development. Traditio
Bengali Muslim voters had preferr
Congress(I), while Bengali Hindu
tended to favour the Communist Pa
India-Marxist (CPI-M). This time arou
Bengalis congregated along purely l
lines and voted Congress(I), leading
communist wipe-out. Yet another ex
tion was offered for this twist by a B
voter in Gauhati who had been una
exercise his franchise on Februar
"Already we are the targets of Assam
tacks," he said, "and if we had voted
Marxists then we would also have be
tims of Congress(I) hostility. It is be
vote for the party that is ruling
Centre—our interests can be better
after by the Congress(I)."

Hollow Victory: In the end, the
ress(I) won as many as 88 of the 108 s
which polling could be completed. B
victory was morally and legally hollo
elections had been held on the basis of
ral rolls as on January 1, 1979, which h
been revised since; no earnest attem
made by the Government to find way
the constitutional impasse it kept hol
as an excuse. The state's Assamese p
tion opposed the elections tooth a
and three major national parties bo
the polls.

In every way the elections ha
thrust down the state's throat—wit
government employee in Assam refu
cooperate, massive help had to be ru
from outside, buttressed by a huge pa
tary force, and a variety of autho
laws had to be brought into play in
keep up a semblance of discipline. A
tion week progressed, the state's co
cations network suffered grievous
downs.

So busy was the Government in
that the elections took place that it
ignored the rising tide of violence an
that swept the state. Too late, as the a
tration began to disengage from the i
tives of conducting a "free and fair p
turned its attention to the corpses
this grim arena, the travesty of the el
legitimacy shone through. Polling st
was claimed to be at least 20 per cent,
was only because Bengali and im
pockets had turned out in large nu
Inevitably, in the end, pollin

nbly constituencies had to be "indefi-
y postponed"; seven of the 12 Lok
a constituencies needed repolling, and
d 11 assembly segments and 351 booths.
2 constituencies polling was below 5 per
and in 10 Upper Assam constituencies
w 3 per cent. In Dharmapur consti-
cy in Kamrup district, for instance, only
of the 67,341 voters exercised their fran-
. One vote was found invalid, and the
rs all went to independent candidate Dr
midhar Barman. In some constituencies
Sipajhar in Darrang district, the
nistration was forced to send out "mo-
polling booths" in order to try to woo
rs.

As late as on February 17, after two
rvers he had sent to Assam returned to
rt on the worsening situation, Chief
ion Commissioner R.K. Trivedi asked
Assam Government if it wanted to go
d with polling on the final day, Feb-
y 20. Even then, with more violence
ly predictable, the Government said
the situation was all right.

ndeed Chief Secretary Ramesh Chan-
'daily 5 p.m. press briefings at Dispur
red the derisive label "five o'clock fol-
—after US military press briefings in the
am War when the generals insisted all
well. The refrain became wearingly
liar—polling was progressing apace,
nce was "sporadic and minimal", and
as well. On February 14, even as booths
e Dispur constituency registered less
1 per cent polling, All India Radio said
s news bulletin that polling had been
k to moderate".

MEANWHILE, for 18 days from February 5, a state-wide non-cooperation movement crippled all public services, shut down banks and offices, and led to hundreds of arrests under the National Security Act (NSA), the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) and the Assam Executive Magistrates (Special Powers) Act. Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi told the Lok Sabha on February 22 that 425 government employees in Assam had either been dismissed or suspended because of refusal to perform election duty. Hundreds of others successfully evaded arrest warrants.

Pre-poll violence occurred mainly when mobs of militant Assamese burnt bridges and government buildings throughout the state and attacked police outposts and stations. Beginning with the Mangaldoi area on February 2, such anti-election violence had claimed almost 100 lives by February 12.

That day, when thousands of immigrant attackers crossed the Marakalahi river near Boko in Kamrup district and fell upon the Assamese village of Chamaria, the violence took on a new and uglier form—senseless and bloody clashes between different communities. In the days following, hundreds of such inter-community clashes broke out throughout the valley, and such violence further ensured that turn-out on polling days would be close to zero.

Delayed Aid: Hundreds of thousands of people from every Assamese community began to flee their homes during election week, to seek shelter in hastily set up relief camps in government schools or colleges. Tragically, there were fatal delays in rushing police or paramilitary aid to areas ravaged by violence and killing because important road bridges had earlier been destroyed by the anti-election agitators. Rumour and panic therefore gripped the Brahmaputra valley, and coupled with crippled communications, they set off even more savage ethnic conflagrations.

What shocked the nation all the more was the fact that the Government could have avoided the bloodshed if it had let humanitarianism override political ambition. Even as late as on February 11, the leaders of non-communist opposition parties in Parliament met the chief election commissioner to beg for a postponement, and promised cooperation if the Government wanted to pass an amendment to the Constitution to extend President's Rule. Their pleas were ignored.

During election week itself, the election commissioner could have used his constitutional authority to call a halt to the elections and the carnage, even if it meant forcing the Government to search for legal solutions in a very short period. Legal experts pointed out that as a last resort, the Government could even have declared an emergency in Assam by presidential proclamation, thus buying valuable time and extending the constitutional deadline of March 18 when President's Rule was due to end. But, gripped by an astonishing indifference, the Government barelled on towards the inevitably bloody conclusion of its "inescapable constitutional obligation".

Partisan Campaign: The very nature of the Congress(I) campaign in Assam had laid the foundation for the holocaust. Union Railway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury was sent in specifically to reassure the immigrant Muslim voters who constituted the party's largest vote bank. Party General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee who has charge of the North-eastern states and has played pivotal roles in foisting Congress(I) governments in Assam; Manipur and Nagaland; was assisted by Member of Parliament Rajesh Pilot; who comes from Rajasthan and was posted in Assam mainly in order to obtain the financial support of the powerful Marwari traders who dominate commerce in the state.

And Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, at her election speeches in immigrant or Bengali constituencies, repeatedly stressed her government's commitment to protect the interests of the "minorities". Intelligence sources say her speeches could easily have been construed as inflammatory.

In fact, intelligence reports on Assam had consistently warned against the elections, and as the scale of violence escalated, Mrs Gandhi and her advisers were told that continuing with the elections would mean unprecedented violence and deaths. But all

Victims of the Nellie carnage

THE COMMUNITIES

Threatened Identities

NOWHERE else in India have such sharp divisions along ethnic and lingustic lines occurred since 1947 as in Assam. In the Assamese-Bengali schism, for instance, what struck observers was the fact that both sides included Hindus and Muslims. The 'native' Assamese are estimated to number 48 lakh now—the Draft 5th Five Year Plan calculated that the total population in the state would rise to 210 lakh in 1983, up from 146 lakh in 1971—and are dominated by the upper-caste *kalita* Hindus. The Bengalis, on the other hand, are estimated to number 120 lakh now. Such facts have increased the Assamese feeling that their identity is being submerged in a Bengali deluge.

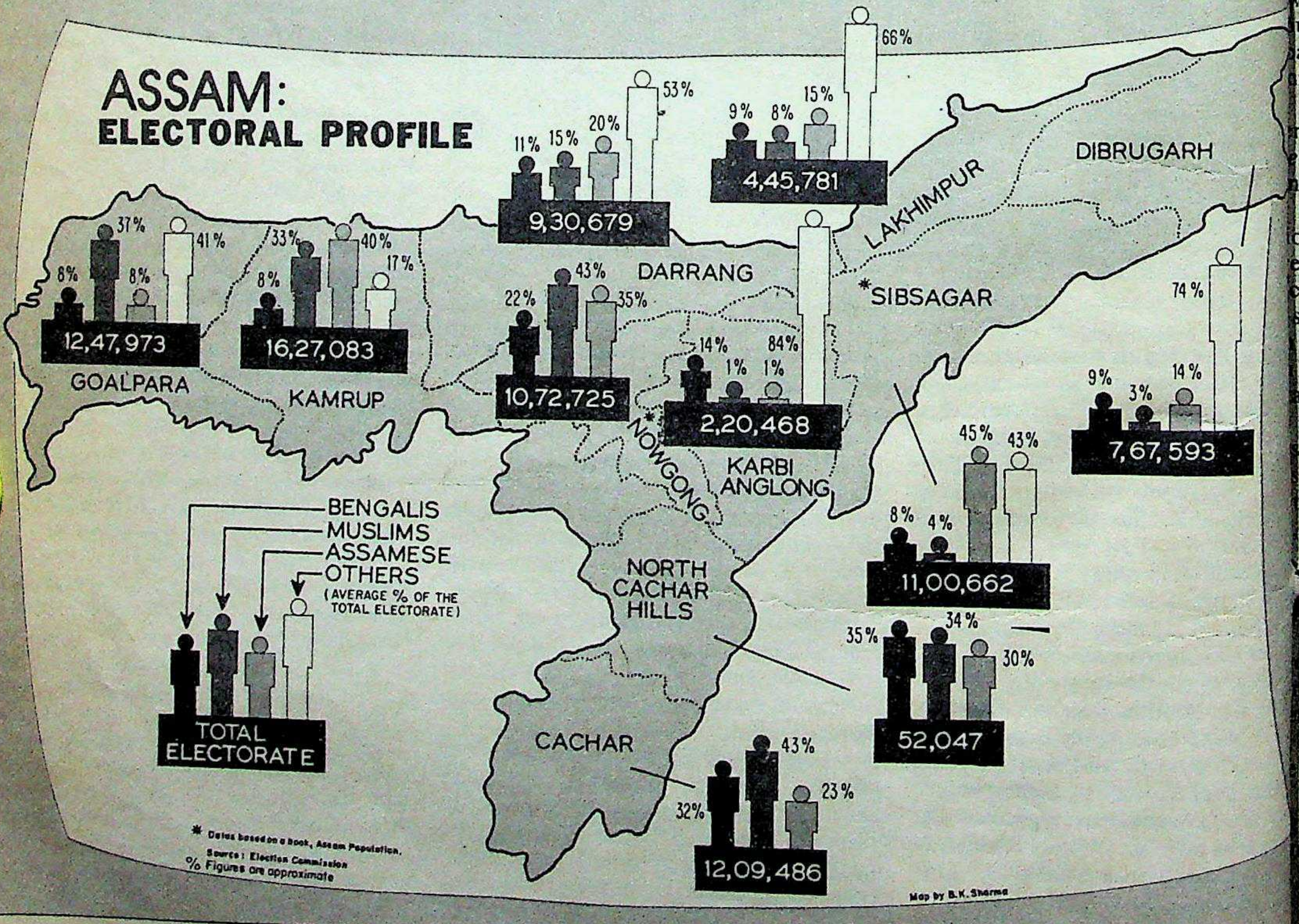
Traditionally, the Assamese, who dominate in the Kamrup, Darrang, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur districts, are land-owning agriculturists. As population has leap-frogged and available land has shrunk, the Assamese have developed a strong anti-Bengali xenophobia. Most of the Bengalis in Assam are immigrants from the Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of the pre-1947 East Bengal and later Bangladesh, and they have settled on prime land along the banks of the Brahmaputra, the *char* areas.

Rising Resentment: Assamese animosity towards the Bengalis has historical roots. The British brought in large numbers of Bengalis to man their colonial administration, and the better-educated Bengalis have over the years consolidated their hold over the white-collar jobs. In the countryside, the industrious immigrants grow more lucrative cash crops like chilli, jute and mustard, while the Assamese tend to stick to rice cultivation.

Even today the Assamese derisively repeat a 60-year-old adage: "Wherever there is a carcass, there vultures will gather; where there is waste land, thither flock the Mymensinghias." Today, the immigrant Bengalis completely dominate the populous Cachar district, and parts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong districts. Constantly opposed to the anti-foreigners agitation, the Bengalis ha now been pushed into a far more milita anti-Assamese posture by the election

But the electoral violence threw u new factor—the latent frustration of t plains tribals. The total tribal populati in Assam today is roughly 23 lakh, a almost 40 per cent of them are Boros w dominate Karbi Anglong district, t Kokrajhar subdivision of Goalpara d trict, the Gauhati subdivision of Kamr district, the Mangaldoi subdivision Darrang district, and the Dhemaji su division of Lakhimpur district; the oth tribes are the Rabhas, the Lalungs, t Dimachas, the Kukis, the Garos, t Hmars, and the Mechs. Tribal literacy Assam has been averaging only 20 p cent against the state-wide average of per cent.

Tribal Displacement: Over the yea the tribals have suffered serious s rinkages in their land-holdings, and sin most of them depend on the *jhum* slash-and-burn system of cultivatio dwindling land productivity has added their economic problems. Says anthrop logist Dr B.K. Roy Burman: "The trib are losing their control over resources varying rates, but compensatory fu ctions in the production system are n


ASSAM:
ELECTORAL PROFILE
BENGALIS
MUSLIMS
ASSAMESE
OTHERS
(AVERAGE % OF THE TOTAL ELECTORATE)
TOTAL ELECTORATE
GOALPARA
8%
37%
8%
41%
12,47,973
KAMRUP
8%
33%
40%
17%
16,27,083
DARRANG
22%
43%
35%
10,72,725
11%
15%
20%
53%
9,30,679
9%
8%
15%
66%
4,45,781
LAKHIMPUR
DIBRUGARH
SIBSAGAR
14%
1%
1%
84%
2,20,468
KARBI ANGLONG
NOWGONG
74%
9%
3%
14%
7,67,593
8%
4%
45%
43%
11,00,662
NORTH CACHAR HILLS
35%
34%
30%
52,047
CACHAR
32%
43%
23%
12,09,486

* Datas based on a book, Assam Population.
Source: Election Commission
% Figures are approximate

Map by B.K. Sharma

ning up for them at the same rates."
Tribal unrest has been articulated
st by the Boros, who attacked anti-
tion Assamese villagers near Gohpur
Darrang district. The Boros owe al-
ance to the Plains Tribals Council of
am (PTCA) which has been clamouring
a separate tribal state called
ayachal—an area which would take in
bi Anglong district and the northern
tions of Kamrup, Darrang and
himpur

Although agitation leaders in AASU
suaded the Karbi Anglong People's
nference to join hands with the
vement—the Conference even partici-
ed in the last session of the Assam
itya Sabha at Diphu in January—the
A has successfully harped upon the
amese penchant for suppressing tribal
bitions. The Boros' festering anger
loded at Gohpur on February 14,
n thousands of armed Boros clashed
h Assamese villagers, leading to at
t 50 villages on both sides burnt down
nearly 100 people killed.

Systematic Slaughter: Not all the
als support the PTCA, however, and
was made brutally clear when the
mutation of slaughter and ethnic hat-
changed dramatically at Nellie in
vgong district on February 18.
usands of anti-election Lalung tribals
arked on a systematic slaughter of
igrant Bengali villagers living along
south bank of the Brahmaputra.
rnight, the toll at Nellie (*see story,*
8) took the total throughout Assam
ore than 1,500.

Pressure and distrust between the
ous ethnic groups in Assam have
eased also because of growing econ-
adversity. Almost three-quarters of
state's estimated population of 200
is engaged in agriculture; but only 23
hectares out of a total area of 78 lakh
res are cultivated. The average size
land-holding in Assam is only 3.88
, against an all-India average of 6.57
. While the agricultural labour po-
ion has shot up by more than 15
the net area sown increased between
and 1976 by only 2.79 per cent.

and pressure—and the passions
ed by the elections—could easily
to a permanent state of hostility
een the Assamese, the Bengalis and
ibals. There would almost certainly
ributions for the thousands of de-
and revenge would spark off even
violence and bloodshed. All these
portents were the result of the
ress(I)'s determination to wrest a
roller mandate from its only vote
the immigrants.

the warnings were ignored, and every time a massacre occurred, the administration pleaded that it had been unable to rush aid either because bridges were burnt or because the police had been too busy protecting polling stations.

In fact, on February 15 as the death-toll began to shoot up alarmingly, a senior intelligence officer in Delhi sent his subordinate in Gauhati a poignant message. "Your Cassandra voice had been drowned in a chorus of optimism and confidence in Delhi," it said, "but now the Government has realised that you were only too correct. But it is too late, and there is no end to the foolishness of governments when they become intransigent."

Callous Attitude: Ignoring the harsh fact of almost 2 lakh armed paramilitary troops stationed in Assam to ensure a fair poll, Mrs Gandhi told the Lok Sabha on February 22 that any "normal person" would have thought ten times before casting his vote under the circumstances. "The elections were not held at gunpoint," she said. "The guns were in the hands of those who opposed the elections." Home Minister Sethi, in the midst of the shock and grief that swept through Parliament, congratulated the "people of Assam" for exercising their franchise "undaunted by the odds facing them".

New Chief Minister Saikia: hollow victory

And C.M. Stephen summed up the utter callousness of the ruling party when he said that the life and property of millions of minorities and tribals would have been in danger "if elections had not been held". The nation was reeling from the news of the Nellie massacre, but Stephen said: "Instead of the recent disturbances, there would have been a veritable carnage."

Janata Party leader Madhu Dandavate made an impassioned speech in the Lok Sabha, saying that he would quit politics if Mrs Gandhi could prove that the Opposition had refused to cooperate in getting an amendment to Article 356 of the Constitution passed so as to extend President's Rule in Assam. This was a point harped upon by the Government; but the truth lay elsewhere. The non-communist Opposition in Parliament had refused to go along with an amendment in the winter session last November, on the grounds that the final round of talks with the Assam agitation leaders—scheduled then itself for January 4 this year—would first have to be gone through.

Fruitless Exercise: In mid-December itself, however, the Congress(I) in Assam set up a 15-member election committee headed by the state unit chief Harendra Nath Talukdar. It was clear, therefore, that the January 4 talks were never intended by the Government to be fruitful, and that elections had been decided upon. On January 6, when elections were announced, Chief Election Commissioner Trivedi was informed that President's Rule in the state would be lifted by February 28—thus making sure that the entire exercise would have to be rushed through in seven weeks, although the constitutional deadline for President's Rule ran out only on March 18.

Constitutional propriety had not weighed with the Congress(I) earlier in Assam. Six days before President's Rule ran out on December 12, 1980, the party engineered 38 defections to its ranks, raised its strength to only 46 in the 108-member house (18 seats were unfilled in the last Assembly) and foisted the minority government of Anwara Taimur. Days before the Assembly met in April 1981, the then Governor L.P. Singh signed an Appropriations Ordinance that circumvented the necessity of getting the state budget passed for 1981–82. But Taimur's ministry faced certain collapse, and so President's Rule was imposed again on June 30, 1981—to be lifted on January 13, 1982 when yet another minority Congress(I) government led by Keshub Chandra Gogoi was sworn in. Gogoi, too, never faced the Assembly and finally quit on March 18 last year—and Governor Prakash Mehrotra, instead of giving the 62-member opposition Left and Democratic Alliance (LDA) a chance to form a ministry, dissolved the Assembly. All through the turbulence of the last three years, therefore, the Government's endeavour had been to keep a Congress(I) ministry in power at Dispur.

Bankrupt Parties: While the elections brought the Congress(I) the predictably farcical landslide victory, they also exposed the utter bankruptcy of the opposition LDA. In April 1981, the LDA's major constituents—the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI) and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI)—had abstained from a no-confidence motion tabled against the Anwara Taimur ministry because, as CPI-M leaders confessed, they felt safer under a Congress(I) ministry than under President's Rule.

This time, too, the communist parties had hoped that their support from the Bengali population in Assam would have expanded as a result of the anti-foreigner agitation, and so actively supported the elections.

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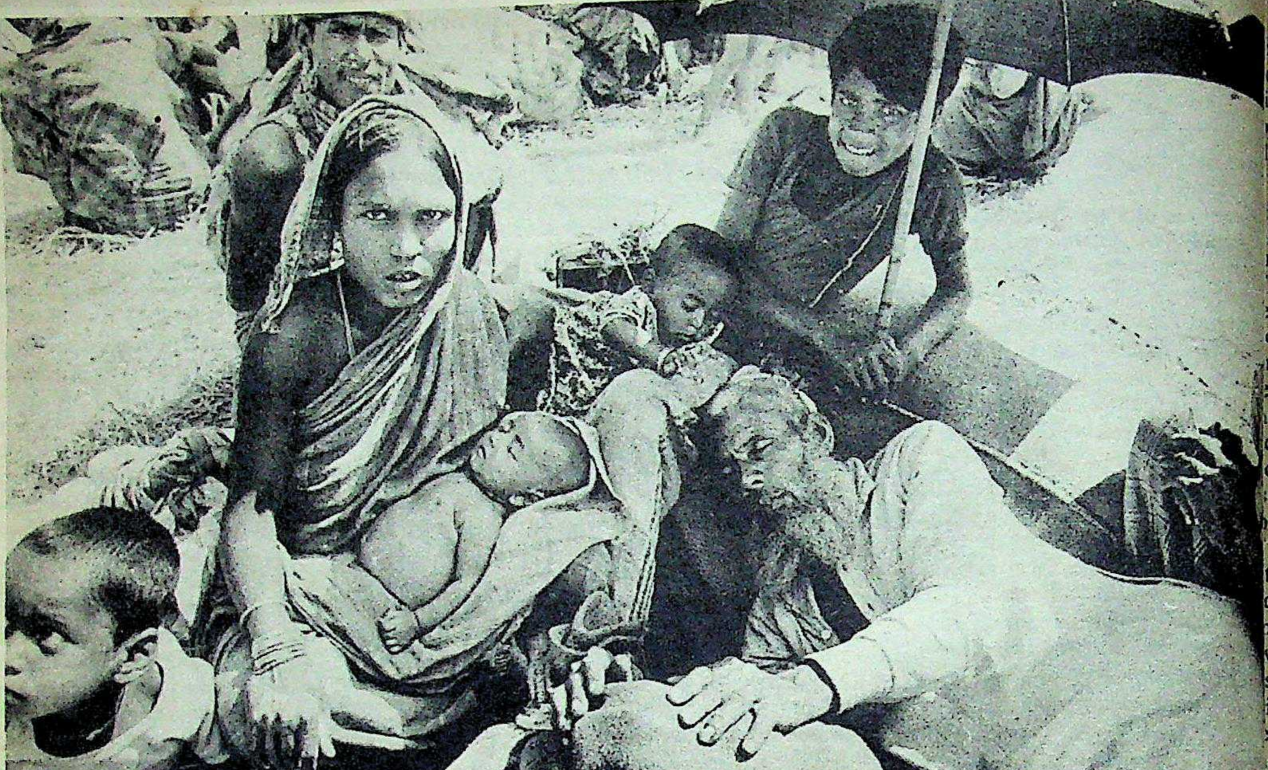


An anxious Muslim refugee family: enforced exodus

REFUGEES

Spillover Tension

THE INEVITABLE backlash of the Assam violence has started. Within days of the massacres in Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara districts thousands of refugees fleeing their devastated homes poured into neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Arunachal Pradesh's Balasori and Torajan districts received 11,000 refugees while West Bengal's Alipurduar area in Jalpaiguri district had 5,000. The influx of the refugees is sure to strain the slender resources of both states and anxiety about this had already surfaced in West Bengal when Chief Minister Jyoti Basu told the Assembly: "On humanitarian grounds we cannot stop these helpless people from coming in. But the Centre must realise that we just do not have the money required to arrange for their relief and it must come to our aid."

Basu's anxiety is not unfounded. While the numbers in West Bengal are as yet relatively small, the tide of refugees is expected to swell in the next few days. And for most of them there will be no going back. In fact, refugees who crowded into three Alipurduar town schools all had one common story—they had been warned by the agitators not to attempt a return. Most of them had arrived on the Arunachal Express which runs along the northern banks of the Brahmaputra though a sizeable number had arrived on foot, their journeys made more hazardous by the fear of ambush.

Though there were many Bengali Muslims among the refugees, the fact that a majority of them were Bengali and Bihari Hindus was a direct proof that the targets of the agitators were not Bangladeshi immigrants alone. Most of them said that they had been living in Assam for generations—making a lie of the student leaders claims that, "We have nothing against the Bengalis living in Assam for generations."

Sorry Plight: The plight of refugees from earlier bouts of violence in Assam, is far from encouraging. Most of the 15,000 Bengali Hindus and Muslims who fled to Jasodanga and Dangi in Alipurduar are still there, living on government aid as they are too afraid to go back. These refugees, it is feared, are in even worse condition with many of them injured and 20 suffering from bullet wounds.

This time round though the pleas the Left Front Government for aid m fall on more receptive ears. Not only h the Communist Party of India-Marx (CPI-M) found favour with the Centre f supporting elections in Assam but Jy Basu drove the point home while sayin "Elections in Assam were a constitut nal necessity. While people have ev right to boycott elections they had right to forcibly prevent others fr voting. Yet this is what has happened Assam." Such faithful reiteration of t ruling party's line is sure to bring its o rewards.

If the Assam elections have brou the state Government closer with t Centre its bloody aftermath has had unifying effect within the state. A reso tion condemning the massacres in Ass was adopted unanimously by the legisl tive Assembly and plans are afoot to o ganise multi-party peace conferenc The reason for this unity is the grow fear that the communal riots in As may have repercussions in West Ben which has so far steered clear of this. A the move is particularly welcome as state again readies itself to act as a ref for the fleeing victims of commu carnage.

—SUMANTA

e results exposed the LDA's total miscalculon—it bagged only five seats, and allice chief Sarat Chandra Sinha, a former ief minister and president of the state ngress(S), was himself defeated in the asipara East constituency.

The Marxist had won 11 seats in the last sembly, but managed only one this time. ked to explain this crushing debacle, state rty leader Nandeswar Talukdar said: he large-scale violence helped the Conss(I) as the voters were generally unable come out of their homes." But even in the ngali district of Cachar, the CPI-M lost all four seats it had bagged five years ago. It s evident that even in areas where there d not been too much tension, the Bengalis d decided to cast their lot with the Congs(I) in the hope that the ruling party uld be better able to protect them.

Polarisation: Observers also pointed t that two of the three national parties that d boycotted the elections—the Bharatiya ata Party (BJP) and the Lok Dal—did not ve any representatives in the outgoing sembly, and the Janata Party had suffered ious erosion in its support. The BJP, hower, has carved out substantial support ong the Assamese Hindu anti-election tationists, and party President Atal hari Vajpayee frequently visited the state ing the strife-torn electoral period to adss enthusiastic anti-poll crowds.

Political loyalties have therefore polarisharply in Assam, with the Congress(I) erging clearly as the party of the immints, the BJP garnering support from the amese, and the PTCA girding for a strugfor the creation of a separate tribal itory.

MUCH worse is in store for Assam in the days ahead. Late last week, with the army fanning out into more and more violence-torn areas in the state, Assam was teetering on the brink of another precipice. The Congress(I) Ministry that was to administer this bloodied prize was itself going through the throes of factionalism as the deadline of February 28 neared. Since the electoral victory had been largely due to the support the party got from the Muslims, former chief minister Anwara Taimur was, backed by Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, putting in a strong bid for the top post.

But Taimur was facing spirited opposition from Keshub Gogoi, her old rival, and also from Ahom politician Hiteswar Saikia. At fortnight's end, it was Saikia, former education minister, who was chosen leader of the legislature party. In a show of solidarity, Taimur and Gogoi both seconded Saikia's name, and the new party leader made tracks for Shillong to meet Governor Prakash Mehrotra and stake a claim for government formation.

If the new ministry carried little credibility it was because the elections which have thrown up these personalities carry no moral weight. Even if their legality is finally upheld, an election so spattered with blood will convince nobody, certainly not the vast majority of the electorate which boycotted it. It is also clear that if a government formed from MLA's thus elected to the Assembly attempts to play a role in the Assam negotiations the impasse will only be strengthened.

The agitation leaders have already demonstrated that they can cripple the state with their non-cooperation orders, and AASU Acting President Nurul Hussain, speaking in his hide-out in the Chenikuthi area in Gauhati on February 18, said: "We will never recognise this so-called government, elected by the Bangladeshis. It is not a people's government, it is a police-CRPF government."

The Government's line has hardened gradually. Beyond token talk of healing touches Home Minister P.C. Sethi told Parliament's consultative committee on February 10 that the foreigners issue could even be "unilaterally settled" by the Government. Less than two weeks later he was telling the Lok Sabha that future talks would include the minorities and the tribals who had so far been kept at bay by the agitation leaders.

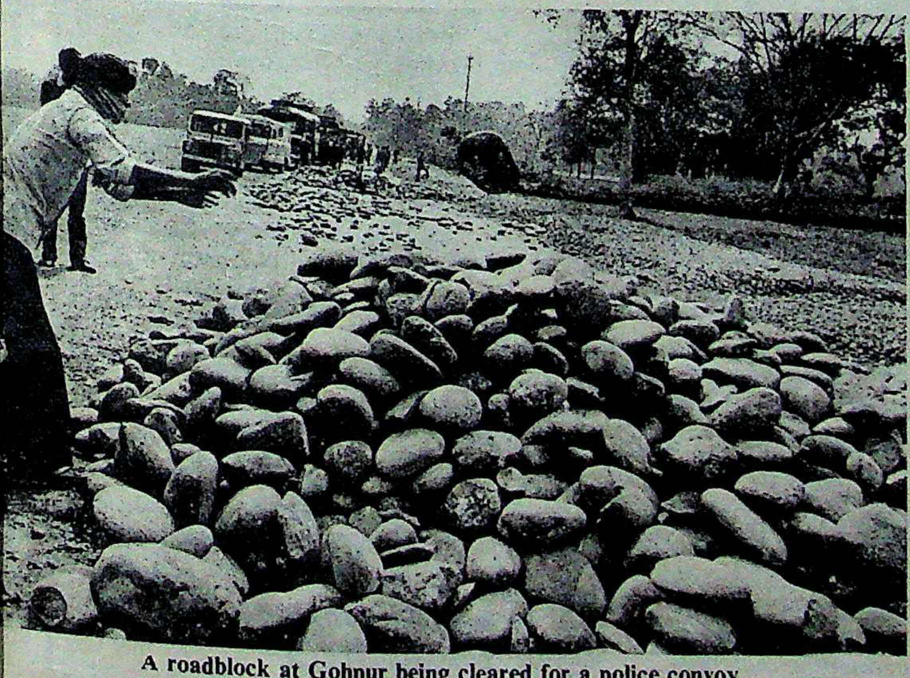
Sharp Divisions: Sethi's confused words are meaningless after the carnage. Last fortnight, as the magnitude of Assam's tragedy dawned, sources close to the agitation leaders, who were released on February 22 by the Gauhati High Court, from their NSA detention, said that they had decided not to participate in any further negotiations with the Centre. Their decision may be of the moment, but with the state so sharply divided into embittered segments, the problem has grown far beyond talks on foreigners, and the most pressing question is to calm tempers, and repair a torn social fabric.

The Centre is obviously toying with the idea of a partition of the state. Sethi told the Lok Sabha on February 22 that the continuance of Assam's "composite character" was in serious doubt, and Mrs Gandhi confirmed the possibility when she said that the plains tribals had been meeting her "for the last two years", pleading to be separated from Assam and given "a separate state or union territory" because they had been pushed out to the hills and remote areas.

Highly placed sources confirm that exercises are currently being carried out to determine how exactly Assam can be split up into more "manageable" units. INDIA TODAY has learnt that the division would involve a new tribal Union territory taking in the whole of Karbi Anglong and parts of Darrang, North Lakhimpur and North Cachar; a Bengali Union territory comprising Cachar and parts of North Cachar; a Rajbangshi-dominated 'Kamata Rajya' enclave carved out of the western portion of Goalpara district and parts of Cooch Behar district in West Bengal; and Assam would consist almost entirely of the Brahmaputra valley.

Whether or not such a partition takes place, it is ironical that so badly mauled a state should be ruled by a puppet government that will have to be heavily guarded and protected from a hostile populace. The Congress(I) in Assam has increased its representation in the Assembly tenfold since the 1978 elections. But it has succeeded in giving democracy a new and grisly definition.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG in Gauhati



A roadblock at Gohpur being cleared for a police convoy

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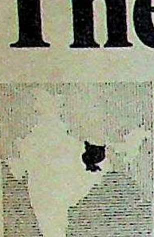


FOR THE last 33 months Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra has ruled Bihar as if it were his *jagir*. Last fortnight it became clear when he dropped 11 ministers that his writ was not running completely unchallenged. But it was also equally clear that by sacking the ministers Mishra had precipitated a bigger crisis than he could handle. All the diverse factions in the party had come together and were baying for his blood. Worse still, the Congress(I) high command was said to be incensed that Mishra had not bothered to seek its permission before trimming his team. One of Mishra's close aides admitted: "Mishra has realised for the first time that it is the beginning of the end."

The drama began when Mishra decided that he needed to "refurbish the image of his ministry". Borrowing a leaf out of Indira Gandhi's book, he sought resignation letters from all his ministers. Mishra who has always stubbornly maintained that he has an excellent team suddenly discovered a veritable flock of black sheep in his Cabinet.

Ruthless Sacking: In a swift hatchet job he used the resignation letters and dropped 10 ministers—five of Cabinet rank, four ministers of state and one deputy minister. Only one minister, Laliteshwar Prasad Sahi, refused to give in his resignation letter. He was unceremoniously sacked. Most of the dropped ministers were considered heavyweights with strong followings in their own castes. One claimed that the move was designed only to humiliate them publicly.

Mishra's moves apparently took the Congress(I) high command by surprise. Party Working President Kamalapati Tripathi who is considered ineffective in Congress(I) circles here, said in New Delhi that he was unaware of Mishra's moves. Other party leaders returning from Delhi said that many Central leaders also did not know what Mishra was doing until some of them rang up to find out if the high command had directed them to resign.

Commenting on the operation, Buddhdeo Singh, a dismissed minister said: "We were taken for a ride. Mishra told us he had directions from Mrs Gandhi to collect our resignations." Adds an aide of another minister, Yogeshwar Prasad Yogesh, a labour leader from Dhanbad who has always stood by Mishra: "We saw ministers being bullied to resign. This is not only unethical but dictatorial too."

As the fall-out from Mishra's actions grew stronger some of the reasons for his actions gradually became clearer. All the ministers interviewed said that there was only one common factor that bound them—all had apparently become disenchanted with Mishra's authoritarian ways. Said Buddhdeo Singh: "Mishra did not like some of our objections in the Cabinet." Sahi adds that he wrote several letters to Mishra about his one-man rule and the deteriorating law and order situation.

Corruption Charges: The biggest losers in the reshuffle were the Bhumihars. Their three ministers—Sahi, minister of state Rajo Singh and deputy minister Shyam Sunder Singh Dhiraj—were sacked. Mishra's supporters claim that most of the dismissed ministers faced serious corruption charges. Others like Yogesh and Sahi, they say, had become overambitious and were angli the chief ministership. However, it well-known fact that Sahi and Bud Singh were close to the dissidents. Dhir longs to the anti-Mishra Tariq Anwa Sitaram Kesari faction.

What surprised many political vers is the fact that all the four dr ministers of state—Rajo Singh, Ragh Jha, Prabhunath Singh and Sad Singh—were considered particularly c the chief minister. All have caused t before—Rajo Singh and Raghunat once had the civil services up in arms b of their rude behaviour. Sadanand who is from the Bhagalpur region is b for his strong links with the criminals region. But Mishra has stood by through thick and thin. In 1981 he h fended them even though the high com

PICTURES BY KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN

Jagannath Mishra: back to the wall

demanded that they be sacked.

Mishra's claims that he fired the men to prove efficiency is ridiculed by most servers in the state. They point out that n after dropping the ministers, Mishra ered them a balm by appointing them irmen of the district 20-point programme nmittees. Many refused point-blank. One mer minister claimed he had refused ng: "If we are inefficient and corrupt w can we implement Mrs Gandhi's pro-mme?"

Primary Aim: What has upset Congsmen most is that Mishra has been selec- about who he drops. One Congress(I) der said that the primary aim of the whole rcise was to cut the strong Bhumihar lea-s to size. He added that Bhumihar politins and bureaucrats have always had a raw l from Mishra.

If Mishra ever had any hope that he uld be uprooting dissidence he was sorely staken. If anything, the dissidents got a p they never expected. Most of the drop- ministers started lobbying against shra and openly joined the dissidents. Says dissident leader Ashwani Kumar Sharma: "We are now getting support from all quarters."

The dissidents also took heart last week when the Congress(I) high command deputed Amarnath Chawla who was earlier appointed pradesh returning officer of the party's organisational elections to visit Patna. On arriving in Patna, Chawla said that the high command had sent him there as an observer but he soon backed down and said that he "had not come as an observer and held no brief to negotiate between the chief minister and the dissidents". Chawla secured the opinion of workers, ministers and dissidents on the Government's performance. Besides, he also quietly cast around for possible successors to Mishra.

Open Opposition: These were not the only rumblings in the party. Both Kedar Pande and Sitaram Kesari, along with at least 10 other MP's from Bihar who wield a fair amount of clout at the Centre, have given the dissidents their blessings. Pande for one is said to have the ear of Kamalapati Tripathi Congress(I) working president.

ked ministers (clockwise from above left): L.P. Shahi; Buddhdeo Singh; Sami Nadvi; Ghanshyam Singh; Shanker Dayal Singh and Yogeshwar Prasad Yogesh;

One indication of which way the wind was blowing came when the dissidents were given a hearing by both Tripathi and Congress(I) General Secretary Rajiv Gandhi. Mishra also significantly did not go to Delhi himself but sent state Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ramashray Prasad Singh to present his side of the case.

The chief minister tried his best to remain unconcerned by these comings and goings. He sent his own band of supporters to Delhi and put the word out that he had followed Rajiv Gandhi's instructions to the letter. In a bid to lure MLA's to his camp he also announced that he wanted to give more of the 196 MLA's a chance to participate in the running of government. He also ensured the loyalty of the remaining members of his Cabinet by hanging on to their resignation letters.

The most startling move of all came when Mishra decided that he would have to swallow his pride and befriend the press. He first circulated the word that the infamous Bihar Press Bill was as good as shelved and then saw to it that correspondents who had surrendered their accreditation during the protest against the bill got it back. The Public Relations Department was ordered to see that its hand-outs started going to the *Indian Nation* and the *Aryavarta* which have been at loggerheads with Mishra.

Goodwill Gesture: Mishra's last gesture of goodwill to the press was to call his first press conference since July. Announcing that the Bihar Press Bill was dead, a visibly embarrassed Mishra implored the gathered newsmen to "forget and forgive". He added: "I have called you here just to remove misunderstanding and let us be friends once again." The whole bill was dismissed with the transparent excuse that "the whole purpose of bringing this bill was to raise a national debate on the subject of yellow journalism."

While Mishra was energetically seeking out allies in the most unlikely quarters, the high command was maintaining its ominous silence. Reports from Delhi indicated that Mrs Gandhi was biding her time while she works out a set of guidelines that can be applied uniformly to all chief ministers.

But most of the straws in the wind seemed to indicate that the high command was veering round to the view that chief ministers who were a liability to the party because they projected a corrupt image or were unable to control rampant corruption should be axed. If this is so then Mishra is certainly on an extremely shaky wicket. And it may be only a matter of time before the high command decides to muster its forces and unseat its recalcitrant satrap in Bihar.

—FARZAND AHMED

Camp members at early morning exercises: spartan routine

YOUTH CONGRESS (I)

White Shorts Brigade

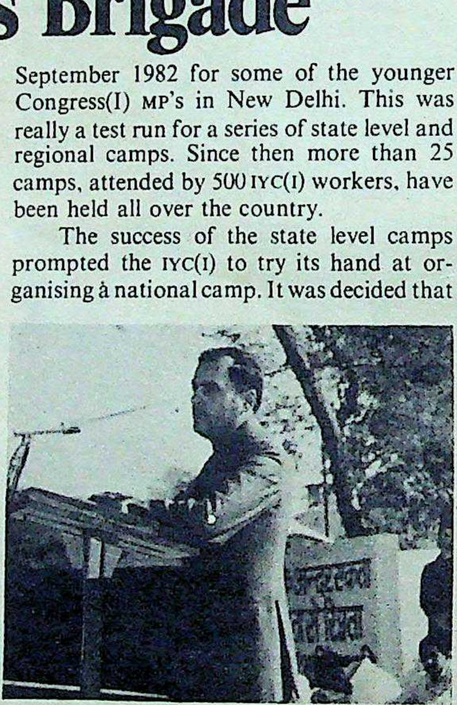
THE CONGRESS(I) is borrowing a leaf from the book of its arch rival the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Last fortnight 150 carefully selected Indian Youth Congress-I (IYC-I) delegates from the nine northern states gathered for an unpublicised six-week-long training course in New Delhi. But for once the noisy meetings and long speeches that mark the usual Congress(I) jamborees were absent. Instead the emphasis was on physical training and lengthy political and economic discussions. Says Tariq Anwar the 34-year-old president of the IYC(I) "Till recently there was only publicity and hardly any serious work. Now we have resolved to work hard and refrain from publicity which does no good for any organisation."

For the delegates the spartan routine of the camp must have come as something of a change. They are staying in tents and makeshift accommodation in New Delhi's Talkatora Gardens. Every day they are out by 7 a.m. in white shorts for a round of yoga and PT. Two hours later the daily round of classes and group discussions start and they go on till 5 in the evening. The discussions centre, as might be expected, on political and economic issues and the IYC(I) men are also taught a few stock defences of government policy and they are also spoonfed all the necessary statistics needed to highlight the achievements of the Congress(I).

Cadres Needed: The idea of holding training camps first came up seriously at the IYC(I) National Council meeting in January 1982. Many members voiced the view at the time, that the future of the party depended on its dedicated workers. And since Rajiv Gandhi also supported the idea, more than a dozen meetings were held to discuss ways of building up strong cadres.

The upshot of all these deliberations was that a week-long camp was held in September 1982 for some of the younger Congress(I) MP's in New Delhi. This was really a test run for a series of state level and regional camps. Since then more than 25 camps, attended by 500 IYC(I) workers, have been held all over the country.

The success of the state level camps prompted the IYC(I) to try its hand at organising a national camp. It was decided that only the best and brightest of the IYC(I) would be invited for the camp. IYC(I) general secretaries fanned out to screen prospective delegates. D.P. Roy, a burly IYC(I) general secretary from West Bengal, was given the arduous task of organising the camp, with the help of experts in rural development who are experienced at holding such camps. One person he called in to help him organise the camp was Malti Bolar, the director of the New-Delhi based Centre for Rural Development. Roy also obviously took a lot of hints from the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS). The only difference between the IYC(I) and RSS camps is that the RSS focuses more on religious and social issues.



Rajiv Gandhi addresses the delegates

Roy called in a host of intellectuals from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University and other well-known ational institutions for most of th lectures. But surprisingly the IYC(I) ha very choosy about the politicians it c address the delegates. So far Congress(I) General Secretary Moopanar and four Central ters—Pranab Mukherjee, P.V. Nara Rao, Shiv Shankar and Buta Si have been asked to offer their of wisdom to the bright new hopes Congress(I). The IYC(I) leaders polite fused to allow any chief minister to Congress(I) General Secretary Rajiv G has, however; spoken to them several

Different Loyalties: Some Cong stalwarts are obviously uneasy that th being kept away from the camp. Wide rumours have been circulating in par cles that the trained workers will returning to their own states for some come. Instead they will be scattered th hout the country to organise small tr camps everywhere. They will also st wherever they are sent for over a year build up local cadres. Since parliame elections are only 22 months away workers will constitute an important without long-standing loyalties.

But whatever the long-term aims IYC(I) may be, it is obviously gearing its to play an important role in national p And while lethargy and inaction has taken its parent body there can be doubt that Rajiv's efforts to streamli IYC(I) have begun to bear success. In ad to the camps, some state units have asked to hold *padayatras* from five di points in the country. One *padayatra* from Trivandrum on December 14. Four others are also on the road- Bhubaneswar on December 16, Gauhati on December 27, from Srina January 26, and from Rajkot in Feb

IYC(I) sources say that more than workers have taken part in these *pada* to promote national integrity. All of will ultimately arrive in New Delhi on 13, when the IYC(I) plans to hold a m youth rally in support of the Govern

Many, who remember the IYC Sanjay's bullyboys, may be unhappy its present renascence. But this tim organisations does appear to have u gone a metamorphosis. The street who ruled during the Emergency have purged and the present leadership both national and the state level is relatively Anwar and most of the general sec are untarnished by any hint of corrup controversy. And if these camps do n up as a breeding ground for team of street fighters Rajiv Gandhi may not real success for once.

—PRABHU C

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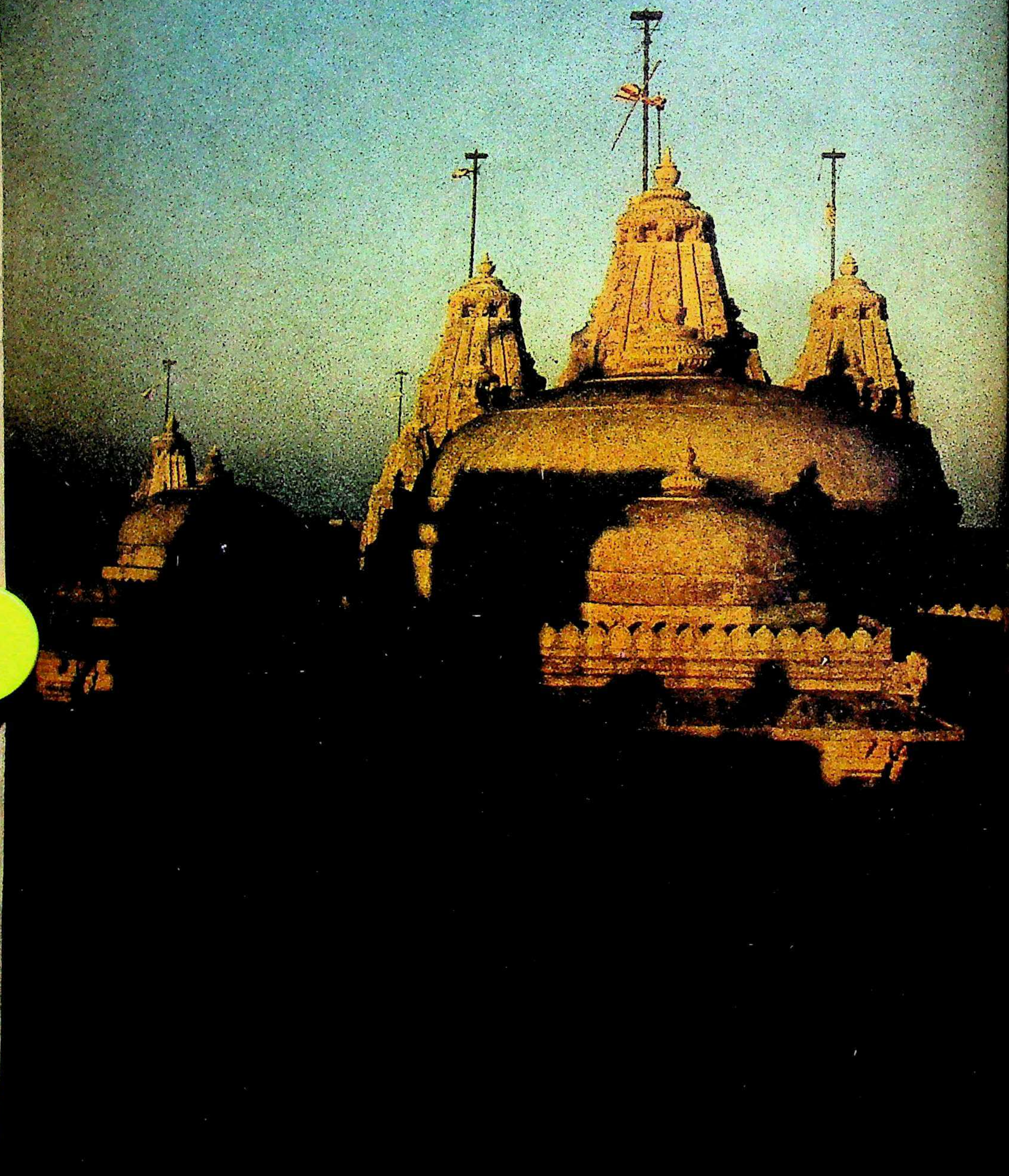

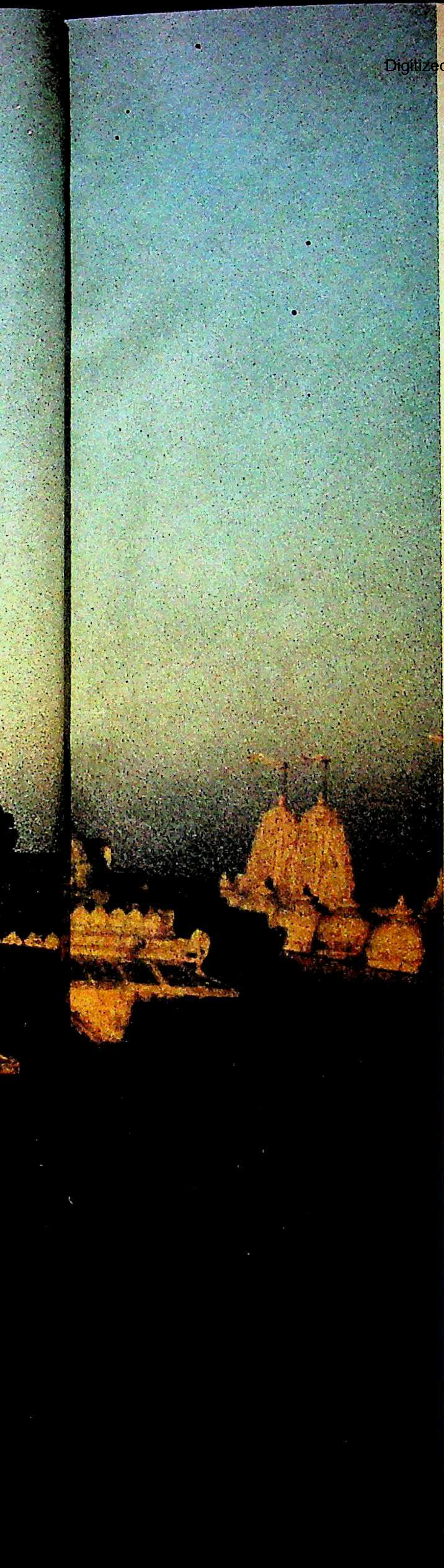

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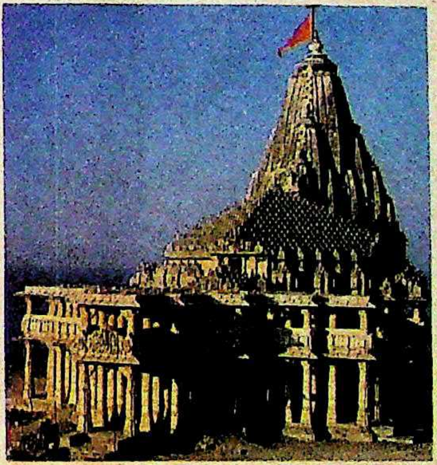

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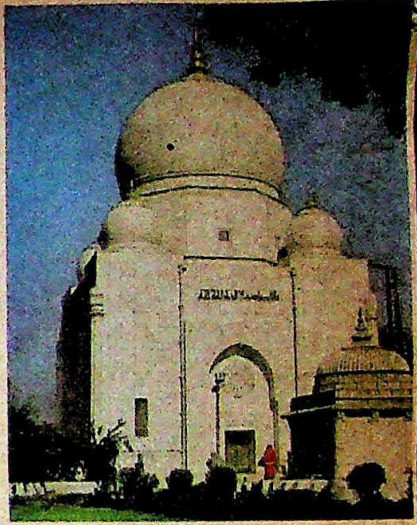

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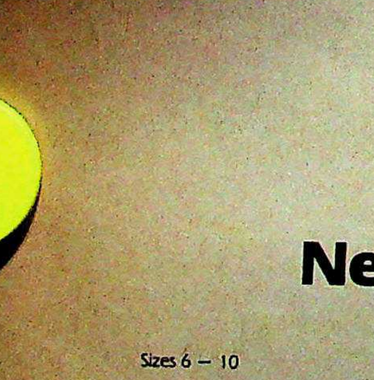
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The Odd Man Out

LIKE Banquo's Ghost the controversial tousle-haired S. Bangarappa continues to haunt Karnataka's Janata Government. Negotiations to induct him as the deputy chief minister broke wn last fortnight showing that the leader- p tussle in the party was far from over. any fear that Bangarappa's recalcitrance uld signify the first crack in the new vernment.

Bangarappa has a history of being at ds with the men in power. Three years o he walked out from R. Gundu Rao's binet. Now he seems likely to revive the anti Ranga which had merged with the nata Party after the elections. Said ngarappa in Bangalore last week: "The anti Ranga exists and will ntinue to do so." He has led a meeting of the Ranga ecutive council on March 2 endorse his stand. Although ngarappa's support has been duced to a mere four MLA's of 32 who were elected with a anti Ranga ticket his decion to stay out of the Janata ty is a setback for the new vernment which needs all the pport it can muster.

Bangarappa: recalcitrant

Rallying Point: For the ne being Bangarappa still intains that he fully supports Government and will not do anything to ple it but in the next few months he could ome a rallying point for other dissident 's in the Janata Party especially those o have been denied power by Chief nister Ramakrishna Hegde. And then the ure of the Janata Party's only ministry hang by a slender thread.

Hegde's concern about the Bangapa factor was indicated in his Cabinet ansion last fortnight in which he added more to his earlier seven colleagues and ointed eight ministers of state. Of the 16 inet members, eight of them were Kranti ga leaders including Abdul Nazir Sab, former party president, J.H. Patel, ndraprabha Urs, Azeez Sait and M. ghupathy.

Hegde recently wooed over two of ngarappa's supporters, Basavanappa and raj Alva, and gave one of them a berth e Cabinet and made the other a minister tate. To counter Bangarappa's claim of g a backward class leader Hegde made that the forward communities had only six representatives in the Cabinet. The remaining ten including himself belonging to the backward classes, Harijans and minorities. The chief minister maintained the same balance when he appointed the eight ministers of state.

Before expanding his Cabinet, Hegde waited till Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar gave the green light to keep Bangarappa out when he attended the party national executive meet held in Bangalore last fortnight. The final round of negotiations between Bangarappa and Hegde were only through letters. Hegde employed this unusual tactic to ensure that Bangarappa would spell out his stand clearly in writing so that he could make the correspondence public.

Merger Controversy: On February 4, Hegde wrote to Bangarappa offering him the deputy chief minister's post only if he agreed that the Kranti Ranga had merged with the Janata Party.

To Hegde's surprise, three days later, Bangarappa not only said that the party members had to approve the merger, but also added the bombshell that if he accepted the post, the Government should be called a Janata-front government. Hegde waited till he met Chandra Shekhar before sending a long letter to Bangarappa expressing his disappointment over his refusal and stating clearly that he could not accept Bangarappa's clause of having a Janata-Ranga front government. Said Hegde later: "This is not a coalition government. If we make a front it will change the entire character of the Government."

With the negotiations breaking down, Bangarappa decided to break his month-long silence and lashed out at the Janata Party for "conspiring" to deny him the chief ministership and using Karnataka as a "springboard to build up its own party." Bangarappa gave his version of the three-day leadership tussle last January and how a person who was not a legislator like Hegde was chosen head the state. He termed this as "unethical, undemocratic and deceptive action of the Janata Party." Asked Bangarappa angrily: "In what way is Chandra Shekhar's style different from Mrs Gandhi's of imposing chief ministers undemocratically? This action of the Janata Party is a big fraud played on the public in general and the backward classes, Schedule Castes and Tribes, minorities and other weaker sections in particular. The Janata Party leaders have deprived a person belonging to the backward class (meaning himself) of being chief minister."

Unwarranted Claims: Bangarappa's claim that a backward class leader was denied leadership does not hold much water. The names of several backward class leaders were suggested for the chief ministership but Bangarappa turned them down. And Nazir Sab, and J.H. Patel say that the Ranga had really merged with the Janata Party. At a joint press conference both brushed aside Bangarappa's claims. Said Patel sarcastically: "Bangarappa seems to believe that Bangarappa means backward classes and vice versa like the famous Indira is India."

Significantly in the Tarikere by-election coming up on February 27, Bangarappa has not been invited to campaign although the Janata candidate, G. Shivashankarappa, is an erstwhile Ranga member. Meanwhile to end the merger controversy and counter Congress(I) moves to woo the backward classes and minorities, the Janata Party has appointed Nazir Sab, as the *ad hoc* president. Although Sab has submitted his resignation from the Cabinet to Hegde, he has been asked to continue for some more weeks.

Sab is likely to prepare the party for the proposed municipality election in May. The Congress(I) has been happily watching the fight between Bangarappa and the Janata Party and Veerappa Moily, the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly predicts cheerfully: "The Janata Government will collapse like a pack of cards." —RAJ CHENGAPPA

BELLARY

Police Action

THE IMAGE of Karnataka's 41,000-strong police force touched rock-bottom when 16-year-old Ghousia Ibrahim, daughter of a welder, was reportedly brutally raped by a constable who was abetted by four of his colleagues including a sub-inspector in the Cowl Bazaar police station in Bellary town. When the local police failed to take prompt action against the culprits, even two days after last fortnight's incident, the normally peaceful town revolted and went on an orgy of violence and arson attacking all the four police stations in Bellary. Six people were killed in police firings and 45 others injured. Three petrol bunks were gutted, two police jeeps burnt and three banks were damaged in the wave of anger that swept the town. The state Government was forced to impose curfew for a day and call out five platoons of the Border Security Force (BSF) before peace was finally restored.

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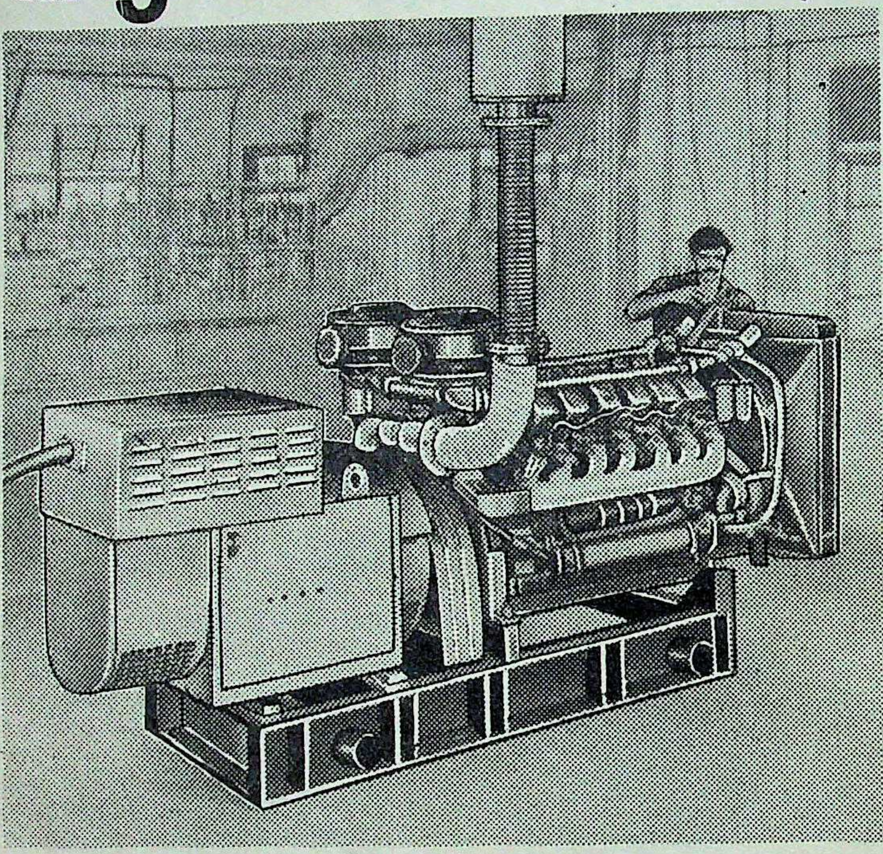

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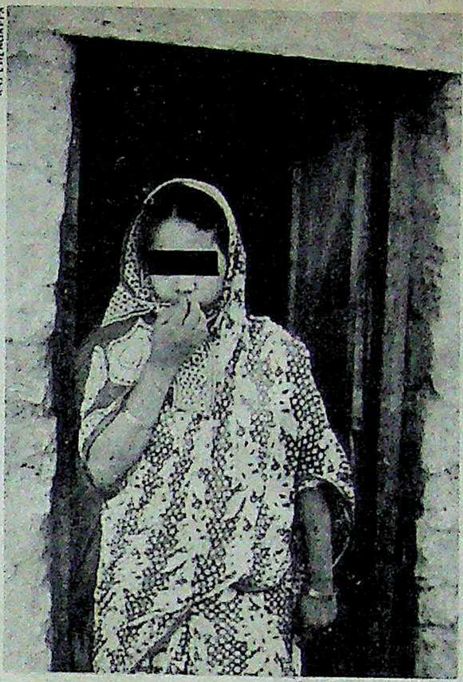
policemen. Chief Minister Ramakrishna de immediately ordered a judicial in- y into the incident. He promised a jor shake-up" in the district police and the Superintendent of Police (SP) A.D. k on leave. The five policemen were ended and the Corps of Detectives were d in to make an independent investi- on into the rape incident. Said K.C.K. a, the bespectacled director-general of ce: "We are not prepared to tolerate any onduct. We are determined to deal with n ruthlessly." But as the newly- ointed Transport Minister M.P. Pra- , who hails from the district and camped he town during the violence, frankly itted: "If only there had been a little tact he police in the beginning the whole issue ld not have blown up."

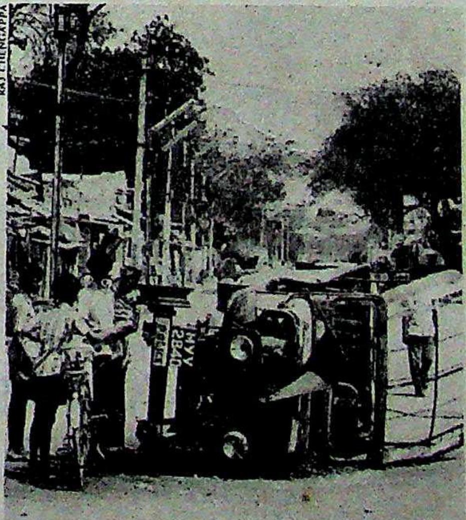
The "tact" that Prakash was referring as the mysterious reluctance of the state e to suspend the people involved in the e even after violence broke out. On ruary 14 Ghousia was returning to her se in the fort area accompanied by her in Basha Kahder Saab, 24, after parti- ting in a feast. They were accosted by tables L.R. Naik and H.L. Rama Naik Cowl Bazaar who ordered them to e to the station for interrogation, despite protest. At the station, which was hed by head constable Durgappa and table B. Thimappa they were beaten for ing with them. Meanwhile, Sub- ector G. Nagappa was reported to have to the station and walked away wi- t taking any action. Ghousia was then rated from Basha, taken to another where the constables forced a "colour- iquid" down her throat. She remembers table Thimappa raping her but after she says she fell unconscious and does emember anything.

iolent Reaction: The next morning Ghousia and Basha were released and a took the semi-conscious Ghousia to ohammed Shamshuddin's clinic which rdly 50 metres away from the police n. When they told him what had hap- Shamshuddin went over to the station anded over the two to Sub-Inspector ppa telling him to register a case and Ghousia to the district hospital. But e passed by the station two hours later und them still there. When he ques- Nagappa, the policeman was rude rdered him to get out of the station. By morning when the bazaar folk found o case had as yet been registered they red around the station and started ng a din. Meanwhile SP Naik who was in Bangalore had returned and had his deputy superintendent to enquire he matter. Ghousia and her mother sabi were summoned and a complaint of rape against Thimappa was filed on February 16. Thimappa was arrested and put in the lock-up. But the crowd of about 5,000 were dissatisfied with the action and demanded the suspension of all the policemen involved in the crime, especially the sub-inspector. When the mob turned violent, police opened fire, injuring eight of them.


RAJ CHENGAPPA

Ghousia: innocent victim

With the police taking no action against the guilty by next morning, the entire town was furious over the incident. First a group of students attacked the Cowl Bazaar police station and when police opened fire two of them were killed. Meanwhile, the anger shifted to the other police stations and the mob went on a mad rampage burning petrol bunks and damaging banks. The police opened fire again and four people were killed. Said the bearded V. Balasubramaniam, divisional commissioner: "It was like a battleground with the police versus the people. Fortunately it did not take a communal turn, otherwise it would have been worse because 30 per cent of the 1.2 lakh population is Muslim." With the violence unabated the police finally saw the writing on the wall and Raja, who rushed to the spot ordered the suspension of the other three constables and the sub-inspector. After a tense day, things began to return to normal in Bellary.


RAJ CHENGAPPA

A burnt police jeep: outraged feelings

What stood out most from this incident was the Government's readiness to denigrate the district police, stating that the rape case was only a spark that blew the fuse over the people's long-standing disgruntlement with the behaviour of the police. Stories were circulated freely by officials that Bellary was the second largest centre for matka gambling in the state and it thrived because of political patronage by the previous governments, with the police and the district officials actively conniving with the matka 'kings'.

But none of this could wipe out the fact that it was the unwillingness of the police to take action against the five errant members of its force that really sparked off the violence. Despite the fact that the sub-inspector filed the first information report (FIR) only 30 hours after the incident was reported to him, the senior police officials did not think it fit to suspend him when the angry mob demanded it. Action was taken only against one constable and only the next day when violence became widespread did they announce the suspension of the four others. Said M. Srinivas, a shop owner in Cowl Bazaar: "We are peaceful by nature. All we wanted was that action be taken against these guilty policemen. Instead they opened fire on us."

Meanwhile Ghousia was taken to the Government district hospital for medical examination 48 hours after she was allegedly raped and Dr Laxmi Budihal who examined her admitted that it would be difficult to prove anything conclusively because of the huge time gap. However, blood and chemical tests are awaited before a final report is released. Meanwhile, an air of gloom has descended over the Ibrahim family. Ghousia is the eldest of the three children of Ibrahim, who is a welder in a nearby paint shop. Ghousia, who is very slightly built, weeps whenever she narrates what happened on the fateful night and in between sobs said: "I have lost faith in people." Ibrahim is more concerned for her future. "I was planning to get her married soon. But now who will marry her?" he lamented.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Bellary

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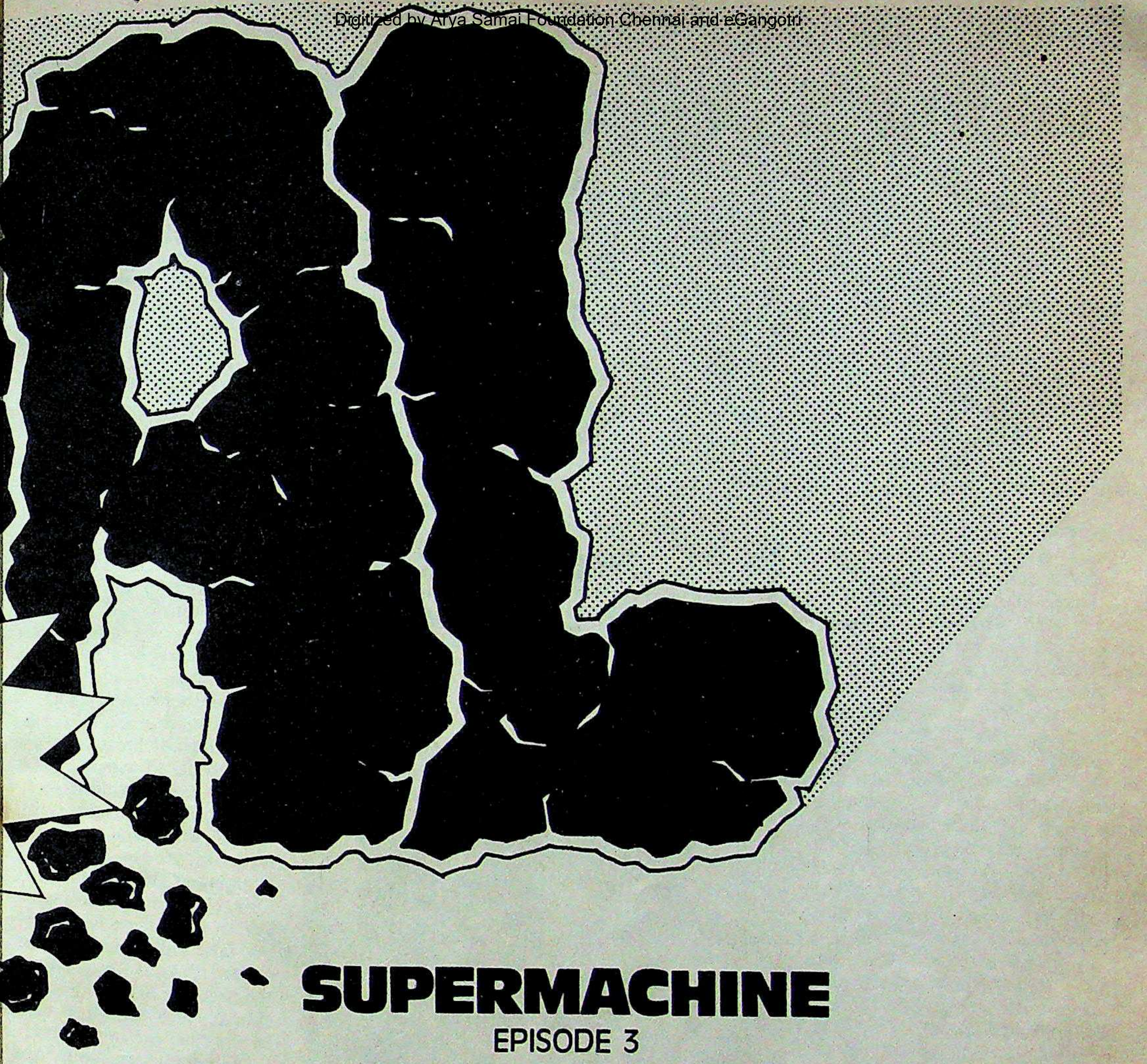

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DMC

Running Riot

THE CONGRESS(I) rule in Delhi got off to a rousing start last fortnight. At the first meeting of the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) on February 17, Congress(I) and opposition corporators traded abuse and invective over the validity of two votes cast during the election of six aldermen. In the end, the chairman cleared both votes and the Congress(I) came through with four aldermen, while two others elected were from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Two days later, Congress(I) Alderman Laxmi Narain was arrested with a group of workers after they had allegedly smashed up the lounge of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) hostel. The same day, Congress(I) Corporator Ramesh Datta was arrested after a resident of Delhi University's Hans Raj College had charged that Datta had assaulted him the previous night in his hostel room.

Alderman Narain is the president of the Delhi INTUC, the Congress(I) trade union. On February 19 he led about 100 workers of the Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking (DESU) and the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) to the YMCA tourist hostel to protest over the suspension of seven YMCA employees. According to YMCA employees, Narain's brigade, armed with lathis, stones and bricks, marched into the hostel lounge and proceeded to smash it up.

Rowdy Behaviour: American, Japanese and African tourists fled behind curtains and into bathrooms for shelter. Said Jill Lang: "I thought at first it was a revolution, or an anti-American demonstration. All the glass windows were shattered and the furniture turned upside down." Six YMCA employees were injured in the mêlée including a visiting auditor and the hostel housekeeper, Philomena Frank. Colonel Sondhi, the manager, was jeered and abused. When the police finally arrived, Narain and his men quietly melted away; later, the alderman and 47 others were arrested and released on bail.

Shaken by the ugly incident, many of the tourists quickly checked out of the hostel. Said Wilfred Lazarus, president of the YMCA: "The saddest part is the wanton destruction. Where is the protection to the minority institutions when the ruling party attacks us like this? And I am told that an alderman is the equivalent of a deputy mayor." Narain, on his part, insists that he had merely been demonstrating outside the hostel when he was attacked by the YMCA staff. According to YMCA officials, Narain and Roshan Lal, an NDMC union leader, were trying to use "muscle power" to get the seven men—suspended in October 1981—reinstated. Most of the hostel's 180 employees are not, however, members of INTUC.

Assault Charges: Equally embarrassing for the Congress(I) was the Hans Raj College incident. On the night of February 16, a student in the hostel lodged a first information report (FIR) with the police, alleging that Corporator Datta had tried to attack him in his hostel room around 11.30 p.m. The student handed over to the police Datta's coat, shoes, a magazine with the corporator's photograph and Rs 560 in cash, which he claimed that Datta had left behind.

Datta asserts vehemently that the charges are "completely baseless". He said that the students had been encouraged by pro-BJP elements to malign him. His story is that he had gone to the student's room at night to pay him his dues for helping him during the election campaign. However, when he saw the student and two companions armed with a knife approaching him menacing threw his coat at them and fled.

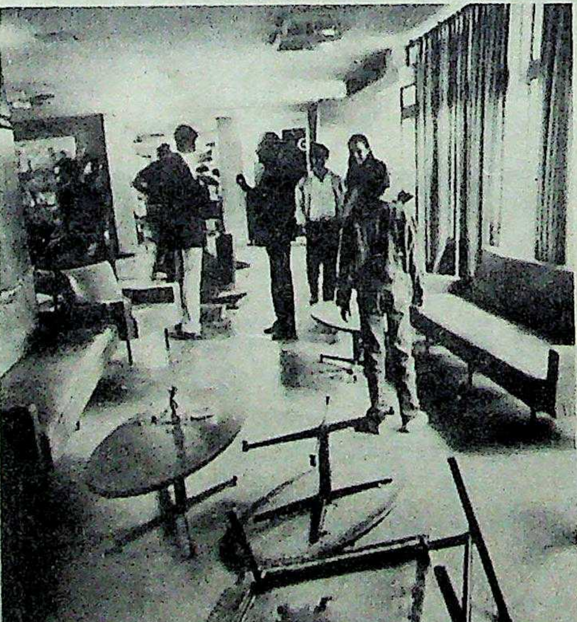
After summoning the police, th dent caught hold of Datta's taxi-drive confessed that he had driven the corp several times to the campus in the pa next day, they held rallies outside D house and at several places in his cons cy; later, they marched to various new offices. A delegation of the Delhi Uni Students Union, controlled by the p Janata Vidyarthi Morcha and the Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad met th versity proctor and demanded an ind

Third Episode: To add to the ress(I)'s discomfiture, two corporato jeet Singh and Amarjeet Singh Pahw arrested last week for allegedly bea Deva Chand, a ration card inspecto Naraina circle. Chand charged in an during an inspection visit on Febru by Congressmen led by Chief Ex Councillor J.P. Chandra, the corp had beaten him up. Chand added tha MP Dharam Dass Shastri had warn that from now on he was Chand's Two days later, Delhi Administrati ployees struck work, demanding an from Shastri who it was alleged had i ed the corporators to beat up Chan

The Congressmen claimed that pector was thrashed because he was and had misbehaved with the publi Chand was immediately taken to a pal dispensary, but there was dence of alcohol on his breath. leader of the Opposition in t tropolitan Council, Madan L rana, charged that the inspec beaten up because he had re get false ration cards made behest of local Congressme the elections. Said Khurana: cident, which was witnessed p by the chief executive counci the earlier two cases seem to e the bullying tactics the ruling going to adopt. The people o will not tolerate such lawless

Despite the hullabalo Congress(I) appeared to be down. The election of the a raised its strength in the cor to 61 in a house of 106; the BJP the Lok Dal three, the Jana one and the Muslim League o week, Rajiv Gandhi final three executive councillo Singh, Bansi Lal Chauhan a nand Bharatiya—after a de days reportedly caused by i All three are relatively troversial. But the ruling p take some time to live down t des.

—COOM



Overturned furniture in the hostel lobby: ugly incident

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MADHYA PRADESH

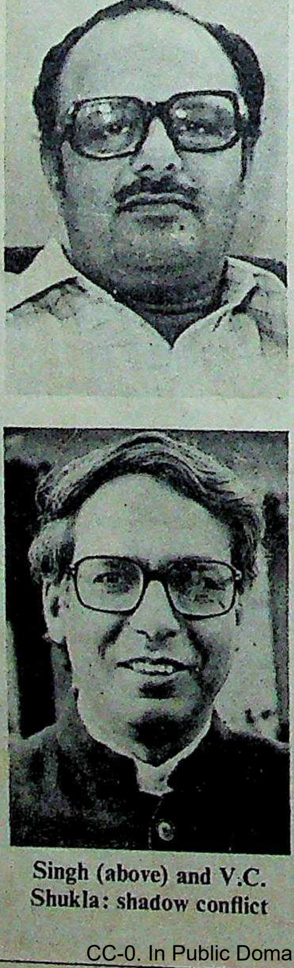
Mounting Pressures

THE CONFRONTATION that has been building up over the past few months between Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh and party dissidents broke predictably out into the open last fortnight. In a series of swift moves and countermoves dissident meeting of 72 legislators and half a dozen parliamentarians at Bhopal's MLA Rest House dispatched five legislators to Delhi to meet the prime minister and All India Congress Committee-I (AICC-I) General Secretary Rajiv Gandhi and submit a memorandum demanding a change in state leadership; simultaneously, Chief Minister Arjun Singh's supporters were also in the capital, campaigning for stern measures against all dissidence. Interestingly, not only were half the dissident participants at the meeting from Chhattisgarh in south-east Madhya Pradesh, where both former chief minister S.C. Shukla and former Union minister V.C. Shukla hold sway, but the latter also happened to be passing through Bhopal ostensibly on a personal visit.

The timing was significant. The anti-Singh movement was given a sharp focus by the rapid inroads the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made in the state. In two Lok Sabha and three assembly by-elections, the Congress(I) lost three seats—two in the Lok Sabha and one in assembly—it had formerly held to the BJP, apart from losing the municipal corporation elections in the traditional Congress(I) stronghold of Indore to that party. In the circumstances, the Congress(I) victory in the corporation elections in heavily Muslim populated Bhopal could only afford cold comfort, since the odds were in any case against a BJP victory.

Furthermore, dissidents can no longer afford to wait because, having been chief minister for more than two and a half years, Singh's future clearly hangs on his ability to ward off the current attack. With assembly elections scheduled for mid-'85 the party high command might not be willing to risk a change of leadership in 1984.

Pressure Tactics: The pressures for change were first evident on January 20, when some legislators and parliamentarians met Mrs Gandhi to supposedly apprise her of the state of affairs and the tardy implementation of the 20-point programme in the state. Since few legislators—dissidents or otherwise—have implemented the programme in their own constituencies, Singh coolly called their bluff and invited 28 legislators to discuss their grievances with him. Not surprisingly, they rejected this ploy. However, with their courage renewed after the ministerial reshuffle at the Centre, they acceded to the prime minister's request and submitted a memorandum reportedly listing among other things, charges of corruption against some ministers. They are unlikely to be deterred by Congress(I) Working President Kamalapati Tripathi's assurance that no plans are afoot to seek the chief minister's resignation.



Singh (above) and V.C. Shukla: shadow conflict

The dissidents comprise a motley group with little in common except an overpowering desire to replace the chief minister. They are also handicapped by the absence of a leader amongst them, and consequently the lack of an alternative to the chief minister. Some of the Brahmins amongst them feel that S.C. Shukla, waiting on the sidelines, should be admitted to the party, while the Harijans feel otherwise.

Many of them have been ministers at one time or the other. In fact, five of the eight ministers dropped by Singh during his tenure constitute the ring leaders. Among them are former minister for home, Hazarilal Raghuvanshi, and former minister Vedram, both of whom were dropped four months ago after inviting allegations in the Assembly and outside. Charged Singh's close associate and Minister for Co-operation, Food and Civil Supplies Dr Rajendra Jain: "If a minister is dropped, he is bound to join dissidents. That happens all over the country."

Internal Dissidence: There are dents in the ministry too, and their pri grouse is the chief minister's immense trust of everyone. Said a senior ministe am never sure where I stand with him cause he won't take even his colleagues confidence. And I am not the only one feels this way." In private, his colleagues complain about his inability to take a stand on any issue and his ineffectua tempt at pleasing everybody.

Legislators of both factions, how concur that the party organisation is in way. Said the flamboyant Radhe Sh Shukla, the first legislator to openly Singh: "The present ministers are like Singh's bonded labour because they have any freedom of operation. There coordination between the administr and the party, both of which have be defunct. Party workers are demoralise cause ministers never bother to even them." Until recently the vice-chairm the state Road Transport Corpor Shukla was promptly asked to resign.

The situation has been further agg ted by the strained relations between and Madhya Pradesh Congress Comm (MPCC-I) President Ram Gopal T Tiwari himself is regarded with mixe lings. While some dissidents defend hi suggest that he is powerless, other leade bitterly critical of him and other offic rers. Said a minister sarcastically: "W lucky if we can see Tiwariji once in a m How he intends rejuvenating the party Delhi is beyond me." Added Industry ter Jhumuklal Bhedia: "The party's bearers cannot behave like clerks. If th not move out, how will there be any contact?"

Opportunist: Meanwhile, the m of the legislators are fence-sitters w clearly waiting on events that can be p tated either by V.C. Shukla's open s for dissidents or by the resignation o dissident ministers, prominent among being Deputy Chief Minister Shivbh lanki, Law Minister Krishnapal Sing Public Works Minister Vimla Verma. disparaging Minister of State for Pan and Rural Development Vithalbhai "The problem is that among the legi party, there is no clear leader. No minister or legislator can claim the devotion of even five MLA's."

As a neutral legislator con "Admittedly, in terms of intelligen shrewdness, there is no one to compa Arjun Singh. But if the administrati the party go on like this, we will be we fare as we did in the Karnatak tions." The results however might be to those in Andhra Pradesh if presen continue.

—SREEKANT KHA

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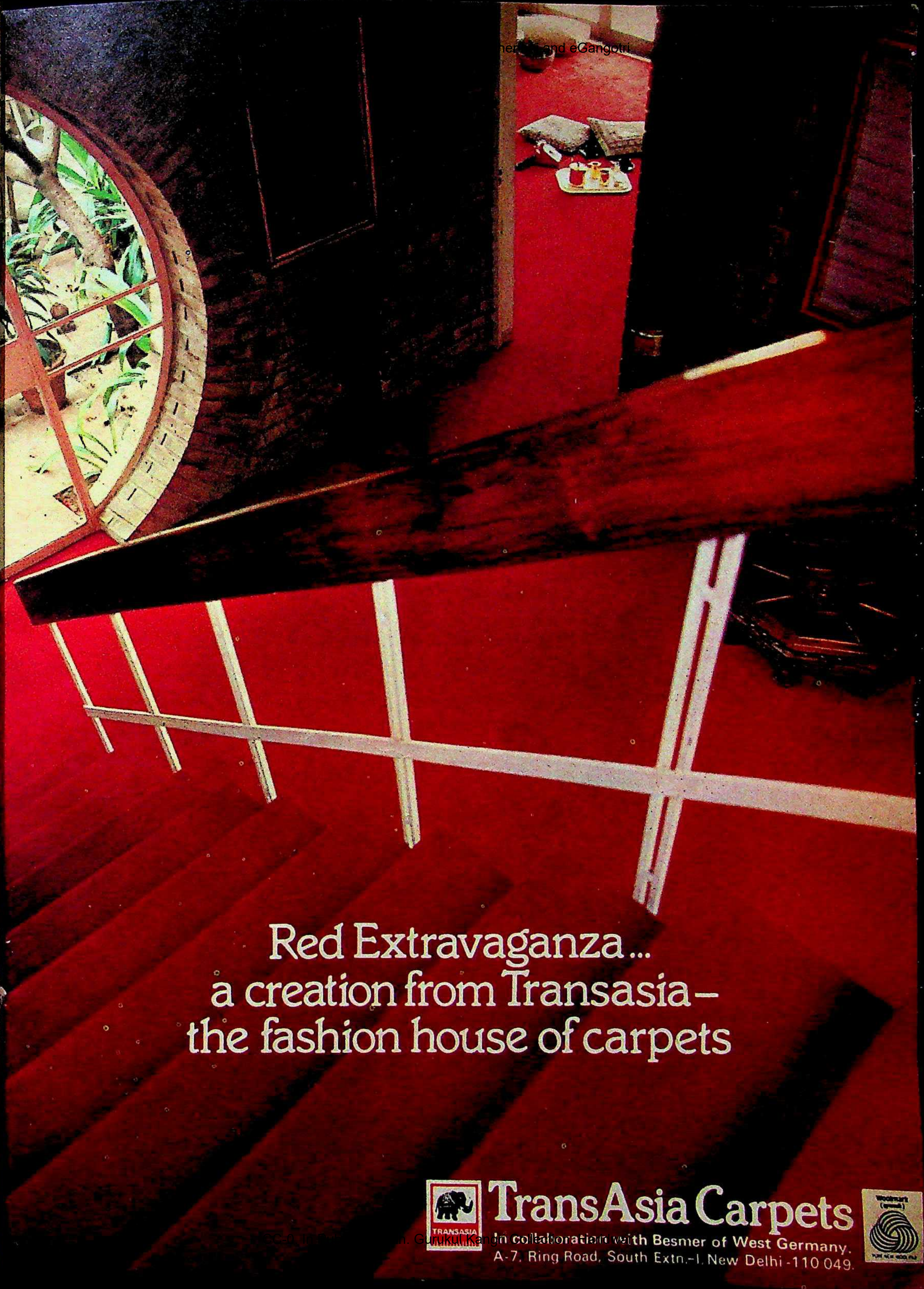

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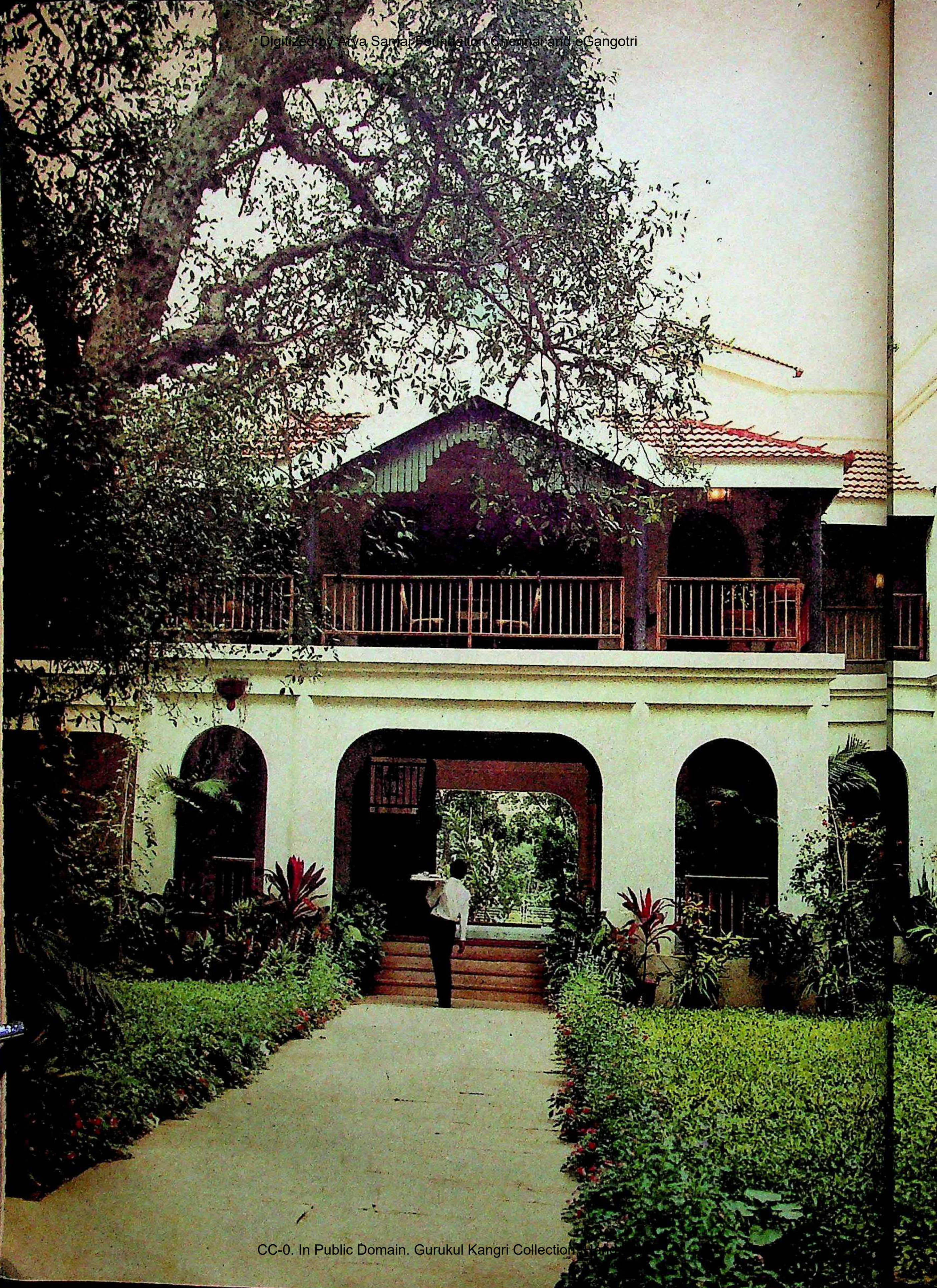

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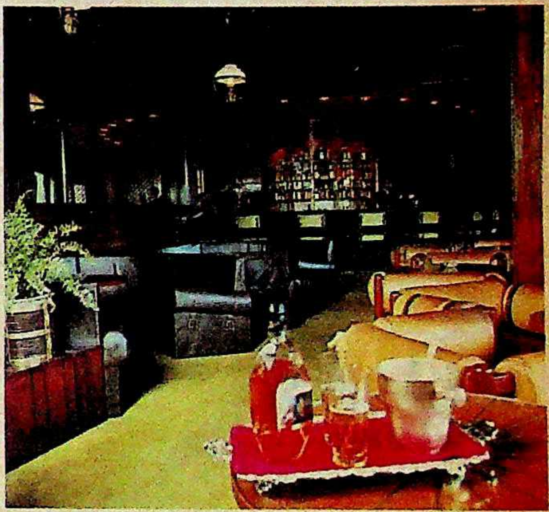

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etting Rich Quicker?

IN THE town of Sirhind in Punjab, from morning till late evening, an uncle-nephew team sits in three nondescript offices collecting huge amounts of money from their customers. Tilak 45, and his nephew Ashwani Kumar, ave in a little over a year collected about 0 crore from nearly 8 lakh customers. promise each customer two and a half ree times the deposited amount in 22 s, to be collected in cash or in kind. Raj Kumar's spiel has been so successful they collect Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 5 lakh in sits every day from people from all over h India.

The 'Janta Janta Scheme', as it is d, was launched a year ago when Raj Kumar, a petty shopkeeper clearing Rs

umar explains his scheme: raking it in

0 a month, hit upon a novel idea "to help poor and enrich themselves a little bit". dbills distributed in this rich town in ala district, one of the five major grain kets in the north, promised: "Become a ber of our scheme by depositing Rs 40 get goods worth Rs 120 or Rs 100 in cash 22 weeks. You are not bound to con- the membership or persuade others to If you ever feel that your money is not return the slip and claim back the y."

Heavy Discount: In no time at all, long es began to form outside the offices; le were more than eager to get a pressu- oker for Rs 80, a two-in-one for Rs 800, pped or a television set for Rs 1,520—a ur television set for Rs 3,840, a refrigera- for Rs 2,120, and motorcycles for Rs 0 or Rs 6,520. Kumar declares that "if have Rs 26,000 to spare for six months, a car" and adds that a good number of senior officials and businessmen are his customers.

People in the ever lengthening queues wait patiently to deposit their money. Mohinder Singh, a rickshaw-puller of Khanna, has already collected Rs 12,500 for his daughter's wedding after paying in Rs 5,000. Shanti Devi, whose deposit of Rs 1,000 last September had earned her Rs 2,500 by mid-February, says that "our women have by now collected enough of steel utensils and cookers". She has re-deposited her earnings to earn Rs 6,250 by July and will add one more room to her house.

With the increasing rush, a number of banks in Sirhind even keep special counters ready for Raj and Kumar when they stagger in every evening with fresh deposits. Says Ashok Kumar, a cloth merchant of Sirhind: "The scheme has changed the life-style of the people in and around Sirhind. Steel utensils, pressure cookers, TV sets, modern furniture, foam mattresses, mopeds and scooters are all in abundance." Kumar claims that at least 4 lakh customers have taken household goods and cycles from them; a local dealer estimates that the scheme has provided 1 lakh cycles and sewing machines. Says P.S. Bajwa, a rich landlord: "Tilak Raj has helped scores of poor families in arranging dowry for their daughters against small deposits."

Modus Operandi: The secret of the scheme, according to Kumar, is that the money is always in circulation. He says that it multiplies through "a number of transactions". Besides, adds Kumar, there is "a good margin available on the bulk purchase of goods". This does not explain, however, how Kumar can offer motorcycles and cars at much below their market rates, as these certainly cannot be purchased in bulk. Summing up his modus operandi, Kumar says that a deposit of Rs 100 can, through a process of buying and selling, be multiplied to Rs 300, of which the customer gets Rs 250, leaving Rs 50 as profit for the uncle-nephew team.

The sceptics in Sirhind—and there are quite a few—point out that the success of the scheme is simply that more money is coming in than going out: as against the Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 5 lakh that Raj and Kumar rake in every day, only Rs 1.5 to Rs 2 lakh is withdrawn. In fact, of the total deposits of Rs 10 crore, only about Rs 2 crore has been withdrawn, so that the entrepreneurs can afford to sell cars and utensils at almost a third of their price—for a while. When the withdrawals start to outnumber the deposits, say the sceptics, Raj and Kumar will fold up their tents and disappear.

Despite these Cassandras, the people keep coming. Joginder Singh of Patiala invested Rs 600 last month, for a return of Rs 1,500 22 weeks later, and asks: "Will this scheme be here when I come back to claim? If these people run away, will the Government help me? Why does the Government not ensure right now that they do not run away?" Amarjit Singh brought Rs 40,000—after mortgaging his two acres—and wants a tractor and a motorcycle; asked if he wasn't

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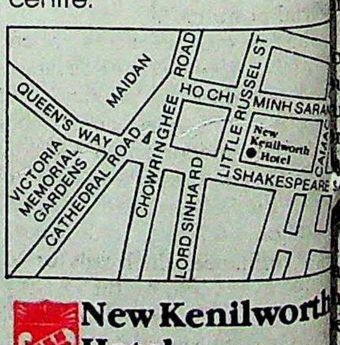

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d of losing his money, he answered: u cannot earn without risk."

Failures: Two other money-spinning mes were launched at the same time as Janta Janta Scheme and the young who started them are said to be abscon- with deposits worth Rs 14 lakh. An- r scheme in Mandi Gobindgarh closed months after it started, but a citizens' mittee was soon formed to protect the ositors; Rs 6 lakh was retrieved.

On September 19 last year, there were ours that Raj and Kumar, too, would do ame, but uncle and nephew announced anyone who wanted his money back was ome to collect it. Says Kumar: "In two we paid back Rs 45 lakh. The third day deposits swelled and we collected Rs 10 in one day."

The biggest detractor of the Janta Janta Scheme is Narinder Mody, a foreign trade expert, who once worked with a Bombay export firm. Mody says that there are no promises in writing, that there is evasion of sales tax and excise duty, that Raj and Kumar do not pay income tax, and that black money is involved. At public meetings, Mody sounds the warning: "One day you will see this scheme closed and Tilak Raj and his nephew absconding."

Mody and his associates have been demanding a judicial probe. Superintendent of Police Chandra Sekhar Ghai of Patiala has even visited Sirhind thrice. But his report, if any, has not been made public. Meanwhile, uncle and nephew are laughing all the way to the bank.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

&K

Stiff Action

COME election time, and every self-respecting government bursts into a frenzy of activity. Recently, he Jammu & Kashmir Government roved no exception to the rule when, learly with a shrewd eye to the coming ssembly elections, it promulgated three rdinances which were to be used to curb communalism, corruption and misuse f official positions".

andoo (left) and Abdullah: curbing communalism

The first ordinance puts present and ormer legislators and ministers under the urview of the J & K Prevention of Cor- uption Act. Dishonest contractors are rovided for under Section 420-A intro- uced in the new ordinance. The second is e J & K Public Men and Public Servants eclaration of Assets and Other Pro- sions Ordinance, which calls for "decla- ation of assets also by the existing and e former ministers and legislators esides the public servants". If the decla- ation is not submitted within three to our months, the defaulter can draw as any as three years in jail.

It is the third ordinance, however, that could prove a double-edged sword for Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. It is the J & K Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, 1983, and under it action can be taken against "a person or an association or a political party if they propagate enmity among different groups of people and whose acts are prejudicial to the maintenance of public order". The ordinance bans drills such as those conducted by the Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh.

Protests: State Law Minister P.L. Handoo, who framed the three ordinances says that "communalism caused the division of the country and we'll have to curb it", but others don't see his brainwave that way. Comments Balraj Puri, convenor of the state unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties: "This is only to curb political and trade union activities in the name of combating communalism." Yash Bhasin, general secretary of the state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is equally vehement: "It's a draconian step and we'll oppose it with our full force, come what may." The BJP is already incensed over the Resettlement Bill. The Jamaat-i-Islami describes the ordinance colourfully as "a sword hanging over anybody's neck".

Opponents of Abdullah's regime are also apprehensive because the ordinance extends to newspapers. Many fear that the Government could use it to curb the freedom of the press. In fact, there seems to have been some disagreement between the chief minister and Handoo on this point. Abdullah said frankly: "I don't know why the law minister has brought in newspapers within the purview of the ordinance." He added, however: "We'll not misuse it." —GHULAM NABI KHAYAL

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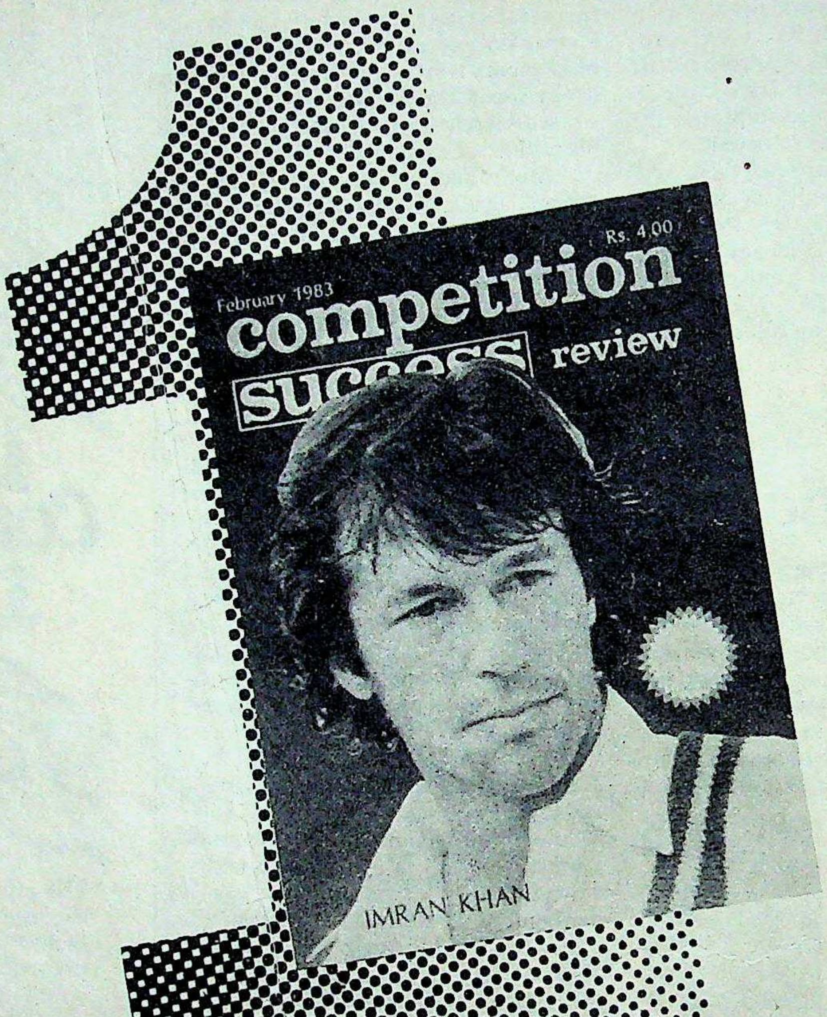
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The police lathi-charging irate government employees: violent protest

RALA

rying Times

THE KARUNAKARAN ministry lives in a permanent state of crisis. Last month, the crisis loomed larger than ever before as government employees stamped and roared their anger in a spon-eous show of protest right inside the state etariat premises. They even tried to m the chief minister's room and Inspec- General of Police M.K. Joseph was roug- up by the irate mob. Finally, the police to burst tear-gas shells and carry out a i-charge before the demonstrators dis- sed.

The protest came on the heels of an nomy measure: the state Finance partment's two-month moratorium on ment due to government employees in of the leave surrendered by them after ruary 1 this year. The payment, which to have been made after February 1, will be made only after April 1, after the ent financial year closes. The employees e all the more incensed by this order as decision was made on January 31, and not give them even a chance to claim ment.

Troubled Finances: The hullabaloo lighted the grim fact that the Kerala ernment was in a financial mess. In the short span of six months under the Karunakaran regime, there has emerged a frighteningly unprecedented gap of Rs 75 crore by way of overdraft and another gulf of Rs 79 crore in plan expenditure. The previous Marxist government of E.K. Nayanar had sunk Rs 93 crore into the red in its 21-month rule. In fact, Finance Minister K.M. Mani confessed that he could start with a clean slate for the current financial year only because the overdraft with the Reserve Bank of India accumulated during the Marxist regime was turned into a medium-term loan.

This time round, however, there is unlikely to be a respite. The day after the secretariat demonstration, Mrs Gandhi summoned Karunakaran to New Delhi to discuss the financial crisis. On his return, a grim chief minister told newsmen that the Centre had expressed its "inability to give any special consideration to the Kerala Government". The Centre had also asked the state Government to clear all its overdrafts "within five days failing which the state would have to face stoppage of payment by the Reserve Bank". According to Karunakaran, the Centre had been told of the economy measures taken by his ministry.

According to Nayanar and some senior bureaucrats Kerala's crisis stems from delay in the collection of sales tax and the stay on revenue recovery proceedings. It is widely alleged that more than Rs 125 crore by way of sales tax has not been collected from the merchant community, reportedly because of services rendered in the form of innumerable agitations which helped to topple the Nayanar government.

Blocked Revenue: There also seems to have been undue haste in the way in which revenue recovery proceedings, started against transport operators, big landlords and liquor barons, were stayed. The Government's own statistics show that about Rs 36 crore has been blocked this way.

Matters are not helped by the animosity between Finance Minister Mani and Revenue Minister P.J. Joseph. At separate press briefings both denied that the crisis had come about because of a lapse in sales tax collection—Mani claims to have collected Rs 205 crore—or the stay on revenue collection. Both ministers blamed "circumstances beyond control". But bureaucrats complain that the cold war between the two—each heads factions of the Kerala Congress—is responsible in no small measure for the lake of red ink.

Secretariat Action Council Convenor Gopinathan Nair and his associates also point to what they call lavish expenditure on Karunakaran and his 18 ministers. The secretariat employees, who should know better than anybody else what the ministry spends on itself, claim to have worked out the bill for the last six months. The items include Rs 70 lakh for personal staff of 498 persons, Rs 5 lakh for television sets for ministers, Rs 60 lakh for VIP visits, Rs 40,000 for a video recorder for the chief minister, Rs 50 lakh for the Assembly silver jubilee celebrations, and Rs 3.94 lakh for ivory tusks for ministerial homes. The total works out to Rs 268.91 lakh.

Indignant Employees: Gopinathan Nair says that encashment of the leave of the estimated 1.5 lakh government employees would cost the exchequer Rs 3 crore which, he says, is only a "little more than Rs 2.68 crore spent by the chief minister and his 18 ministers for their luxury and ostentatious life-style". Adds Nair: "We cannot afford a television set or a video, but this small facility (of payment) will enable the struggling middle class to meet a commitment." But a proposed strike by the employees has been called off.

The Opposition is, of course, making the most of the chief minister's embarrassment. Wall posters have appeared all over Trivandrum saying that the Karunakaran Government has become bankrupt. The coalition is going to pass through some very trying times when it faces a vociferous Opposition in the state Assembly.

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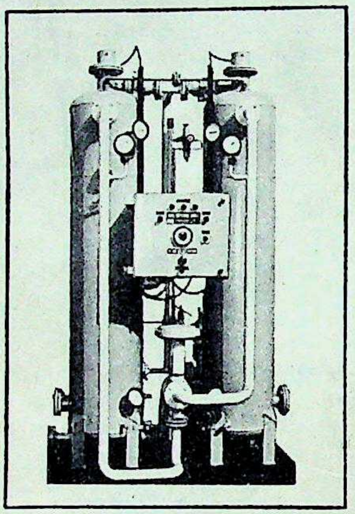

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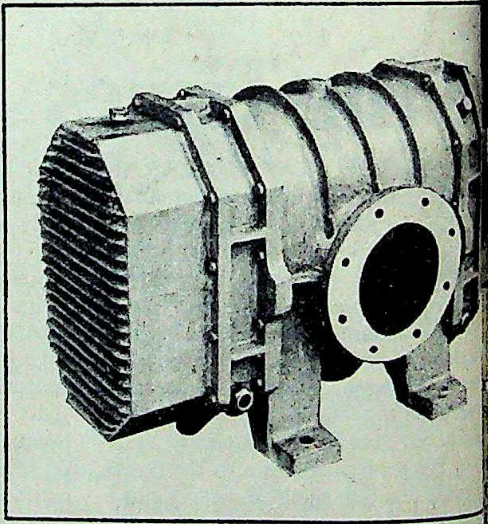

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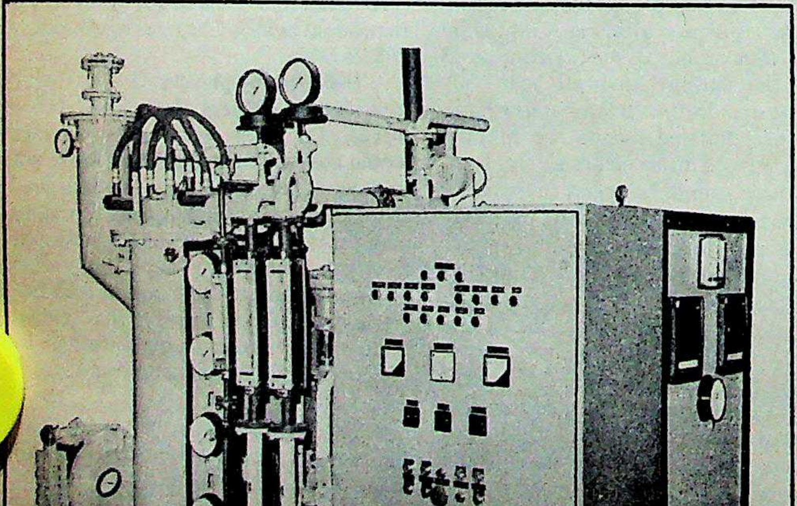

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ACHAL PRADESH

n The Firing Line

THE LUXURIOUS Himachal Bhavan in New Delhi saw some intense political lobbying last fortnight. Over a score of MLA's and state ministers were in town in the wake of the Himachal Pra- High Court judgement, delivered on ary 12, in a timber smuggling case in h Chief Minister Ram Lal's son and in-law featured (INDIA TODAY, February Ram Lal's detractors and supporters All India Congress Committee(I) Work- President Kamalapati Tripathi, General etary Rajiv Gandhi—who is in charge of achal Pradesh—and Union Finance ister Pranab Mukherjee, and submitted iled memorandums.

Ram Lal (left) and Sukh Ram: intense lobbying

If numbers are any indication, then Lal might as well begin to pack his . Ten of 15 MLA's and four of six minis- made it clear that if Ram Lal continued ffice, it would not only be embarrassing he ruling party in the coming assembly on, but would further erode the Cong- (I)'s position in the state—where the y could not win an absolute majority in May's assembly elections. The dissi- s' memorandum warned: "A series of ements against the state Government emoralised the party completely. It is ult for Congress(I) workers to defend Government because these judgements e to the close relatives of the chief minis- The chief minister, instead of mending ays, is shielding the corrupt officers."

Similar Argument: Ram Lal's suppor- curiously, used much the same argu- : that dissidence would weaken the y and strengthen the Opposition. State stry Minister Shiv Kumar, whose rtment gave a contract to a firm owned by the chief minister's relatives for the supply of pipes to state government bodies, tried to convince the high command along with other pro-Ram Lal MLA's that the dissidence was a boon for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which was exploiting the judgements.

This plea, however, could not hold in the face of the growing opposition to the chief minister. He has lost the support of two of the other five Cabinet ministers—including Public Works Minister Pandit Sukh Ram—and that of six of the 10 ministers of state and deputy ministers. In fact, Sukh Ram has become a rallying point for the dissidents; he was asked by the high command to supply documented proof of the state Government's malfunctioning. Ram Lal can take some comfort in the fact that Gangu Ram, an independent who defected to the Congress(I) and was made a deputy minister, is leading a group of junior ministers in support of the chief minister.

But the biggest set-back for Ram Lal was the withdrawal of support by MLA's from Simla, his home district. The ruling party holds six of the district's eight seats and till last month Ram Lal had the solid backing of all six. Now, however, three—Vidya Stokes, Singi Ram and Satya Dev Chaudhry—have reportedly turned against him after the judgement. A fourth, Kewal Ram Chauhan from Roru, is sitting on the fence.

Hostile Legislators: As if this were not enough, Shiv Ram, Ram Lal's protégé in the Cabinet, is in trouble in his own constituency in Chamba district, where two MLA's, Sagar Chand Nayyar and Thakur Singh, have turned hostile. Said a dissident MLA in New Delhi last fortnight: "Ram Lal has just turned everyone against him because he believes he does not need the support of the MLA's."

The Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (HPCC-I) is also creating problems for the chief minister. Although ministers and over 20 MLA's were persuaded to sign a press release in favour of Ram Lal, the HPCC(I) stayed aloof. HPCC(I) chief Gian Chand Totu has an old score to settle with Ram Lal as he was denied the party ticket from Solan, even after he had filed his nomination papers. The ticket went to the All India Communist Party, a breakaway group of the Communist Party of India led by Roza Deshpande.

Even the state Youth Congress(I) is gunning for Ram Lal ever since Anand Sharma, former president of the Himachal Pradesh Youth Congress(I) and present general secretary of the All India Youth Congress(I), lost the assembly election from the Simla constituency. Sharma charged that the chief minister's supporters had sabotaged his campaign.

Counter-attack: For his part, Ram Lal has lost no time in counter-attacking. He directed his son and son-in-law to file a writ petition in the Supreme Court asking that the High Court ruling be quashed. The chief minister also called a meeting of the Cabinet where he swiftly approved a number of welfare schemes for the poorer sections, as well as other development projects. For good measure, he ordered a review of the work done on the 20-point programme.

Despite this zeal, the dissidents are confident that Rajiv Gandhi will take a decisive stand against corruption in the state. The new general secretary, however, faces a knotty task. Union Minister of State for Industry Veerbhadra Singh, who has a clean record was being projected as Lal's successor. Vikram Mahajan, till recently Union minister of state for energy was another dark horse. However, the high command would prefer to elevate an MLA to the post, so the party would not have to face a by-election.

But that is easier said than done for there is a singular lack of legislators from the 34-member legislature party who can bring the Congress(I) together. The high command will have to do some hard thinking before the Congress(I) in Himachal Pradesh rests easy again. —PRABHU CHAWLA

ANDHRA PRADESH

Star Woes

FOR THREE decades of his life he fought flesh and blood villains on the screen and defeated them all. In his latest incarnation as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, however, Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao is grappling with red ink and red tape, two formidable foes who have worsted many an experienced administrator. Last fortnight, as Rama Rao and the Telugu Desam approached the fiftieth day of their rule, the chief minister was discovering that handling mundane matters such as budget deficits, the price of rice and grumbling bureaucrats was not as easy as chastising Ravana in glorious technicolour.

In the euphoria of victory the chief mi-

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nister lost no time in decreeing populist measures such as the midday meal scheme and the sale of rice at Rs 2 a kilo. At the same time, Rama Rao wielded the stick when, on February 8, he announced that government employees and those in state-owned corporations would henceforth retire at 55, not 58.

The decision will affect an estimated 45,000 of the six lakh employees on government rolls, and the fall-out has been disastrous. In many offices work has all but stopped with government servants suddenly faced with retirement working out their arrears.

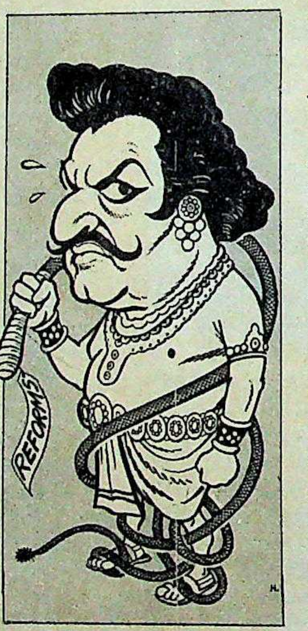
Sudden Move: Even two weeks after the order the exact implications of the order are not clear, even to the Government. In an attempt to soothe ruffled feelings, Rama Rao told an after work meeting of state secretariat employees: "Everyone who is retiring can look forward to his son or daughter getting a job. I should have retired five years ago and if at 60 I have quit cinema for politics it is only as a half-sanyasi, to dedicate the rest of my life to the service of the people."

The rhetoric paid off in the cheers that followed, but the hard fact is that the decision can do little to shorten the list on the unemployment registers of the state, now 17 lakh names long. Scoffs Congress(I) legislator K. Keshava Rao: "The decision smacks of administrative arrogance. If those above 55 cannot work in the Government how can they occupy seats in the higher echelons of the Government or the judiciary?"

Filling the gaps left by the retiring officers could take at least three more months. The cumbersome process for the selection and promotion of employees could throw work out of gear in many offices. But the Government's immediate headache is to settle the departing employees' accounts—totalling about Rs 140 crore. One plan being tossed around is to delay payment by issuing bonds which can be cashed later.

Embarrassing Delay: The Rama Rao ministry, besides being somewhat precipitate in bureaucratic matters, has fumbled with economic issues as well. For weeks, millers speculated with the price of rice which shot up to Rs 330 and more for a quintal on the wholesale market from the normal range of Rs 210 to Rs 230 a quintal. This reportedly happened because the Government gave the impression that, in the new levy policy, the millers would be allowed to sell two quintals of rice for every quintal in the levy quota. Earlier, the millers could sell one quintal for every levy quintal. The prices only started dropping when the Government announced that for every levy tonne, the millers could sell a half-tonne inside and another half-tonne outside the state.

Another impulsive act was increasing the price of milk in Hyderabad and cancelling the order less than 72 hours later following consumer protests. But before Rama Rao asked the Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Corporation to withdraw the order, Agriculture Minister K. Jana Reddy had already given proof of the Government's ham-handedness by saying that he had been kept in the dark over the decision. In similar fashion, the minister concerned was not informed of the chief minister's request to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams to deposit its surplus funds—nearly Rs 30 crore—in the Government's coffers.



RAMA RAO, in fact, has a penchant for going over the heads of his ministry colleagues and talking directly to officials. The chief minister even asked B.P.K. Vithal, budget adviser to the Sudan Government to help him with state finances; S.R. Sankaran, chief secretary, government of Tripura received a similar invitation. Nevertheless, Rama Rao has not hesitated to shuffle the bureaucratic pack: already 40 officers have been shunted around—some have become chairmen and managing directors of state corporations. Others have been asked to check the accounts of the private engineering colleges.

At least one official has rebelled at his transfer. Prakash Chandra Parakh, who succeeded the controversial A.V.S.Reddy as special officer of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad in October last year was posted back to his earlier job as joint commissioner (commercial taxes) in less than four months. Parakh refused to return, went on leave, and wrote a protest letter to the chief secretary.

Deficit: Red tape is one side of the coin; red ink is the other. Partymen drummed up cheers after Rama Rao managed to get the Planning Commission's approval for a Rs 826 crore plan for 1983–84. This is an increase of Rs 221 crore over the current year's plan and is in fact the highest step-up allowed to any state for the new financial year. Delhi will pitch in with Rs 211 crore, and the state must mobilise Rs 615 crore own—Rs 196 crore more than the year's commitment.

There lies the rub. Rama Rao's meal scheme is estimated to cost Rs 10 and the subsidised rice scheme anoth crore. He has ordered across the boa in spending to fund these schemes. H as one of the Government's financial rins puts it: "If we are to raise about crore then the budget will have to be ced on the back of the taxpayer." Bu Rao has declared categorically that ta not be raised; instead, tax collection ministration will be improved.

The Government's financial feel that additional resources can be lised with intelligent planning and political will. Says a Finance Departm ficial: "As one from the film industry Rao is fully aware of the leaks in en ment tax. These are to be plugged: Pradesh nets only Rs 20 crore while Nadu gets about Rs 31 crore though more theatres and film-goers, the number for any state." The Gove estimates that it will be able to raise a 100 crore through buoyancy in taxes crore through small savings and the ing Rs 75 crore through a special m tion drive and tighter government e ture.

Austerity Measures: Rama Ra mediate concern is to make sure that rent financial year does not end in a l ficit which forecasts put at around crore. His calls for austerity last mon on a paranoid tone. Among the fever culations was that scrapping of leg pensions would save Rs 35 lakh a ye abolition of the Legislative Council Rs 60 lakh a year.

State Finance Secretary Madha in an unofficial note to all secreta heads of departments, called for a fr all spending, except on salaries and from February. Unfortunately, this comes at a time when work on proje as irrigation and drinking water started in October after the monsoon final stages. Also, as a Finance Dep source puts it: "It is common pra utilise the unspent money in the l weeks as the new year's budgetary allo may be slashed." Says Congress(I) le the Assembly, Madan Mohan: "W faced a resources crunch in the pa cruitment was stopped and general a measures introduced. This freeze is a bankruptcy." While that may be mature judgement, there was no do Rama Rao was finding his latest more redoubtable than the ones he is facing.

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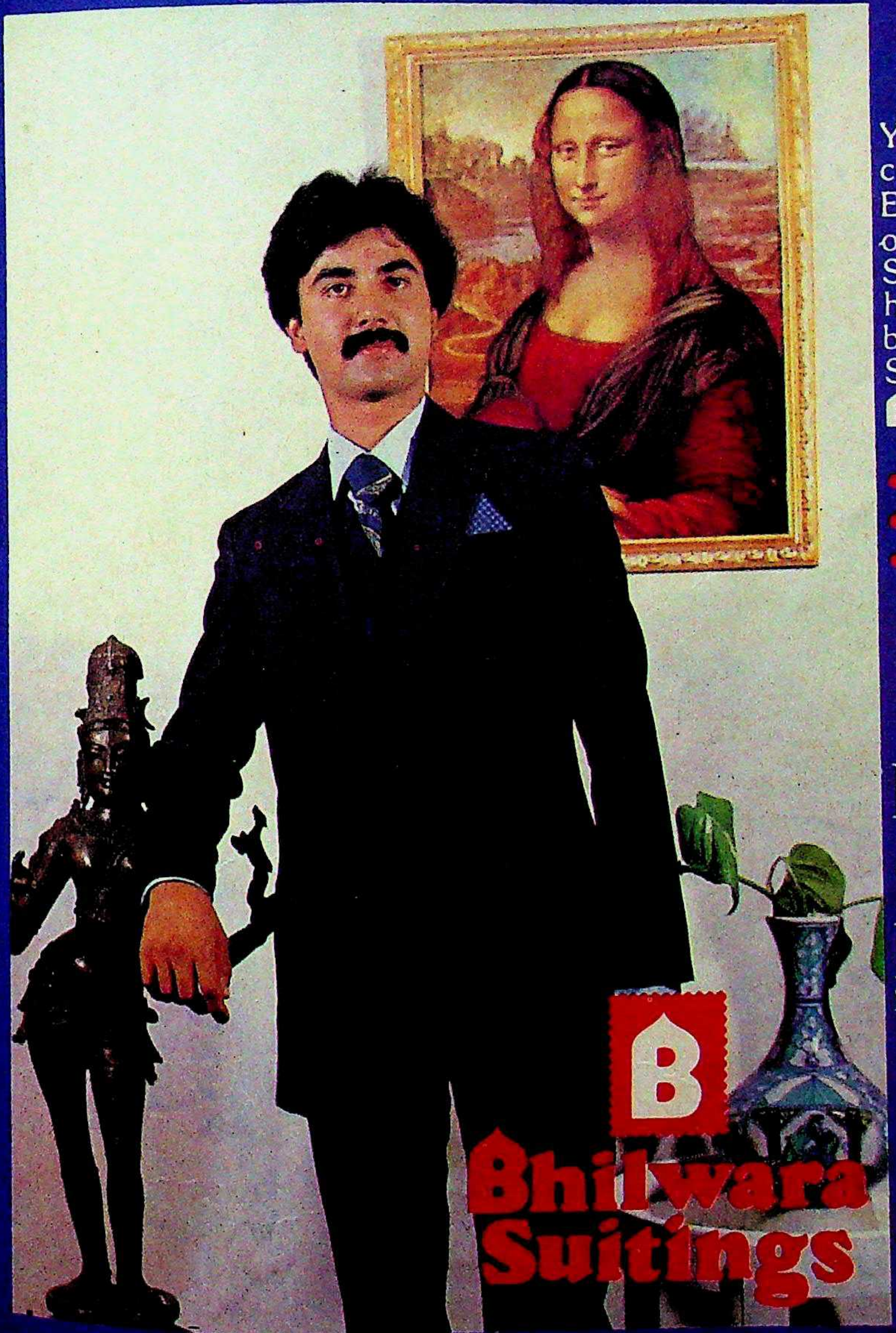

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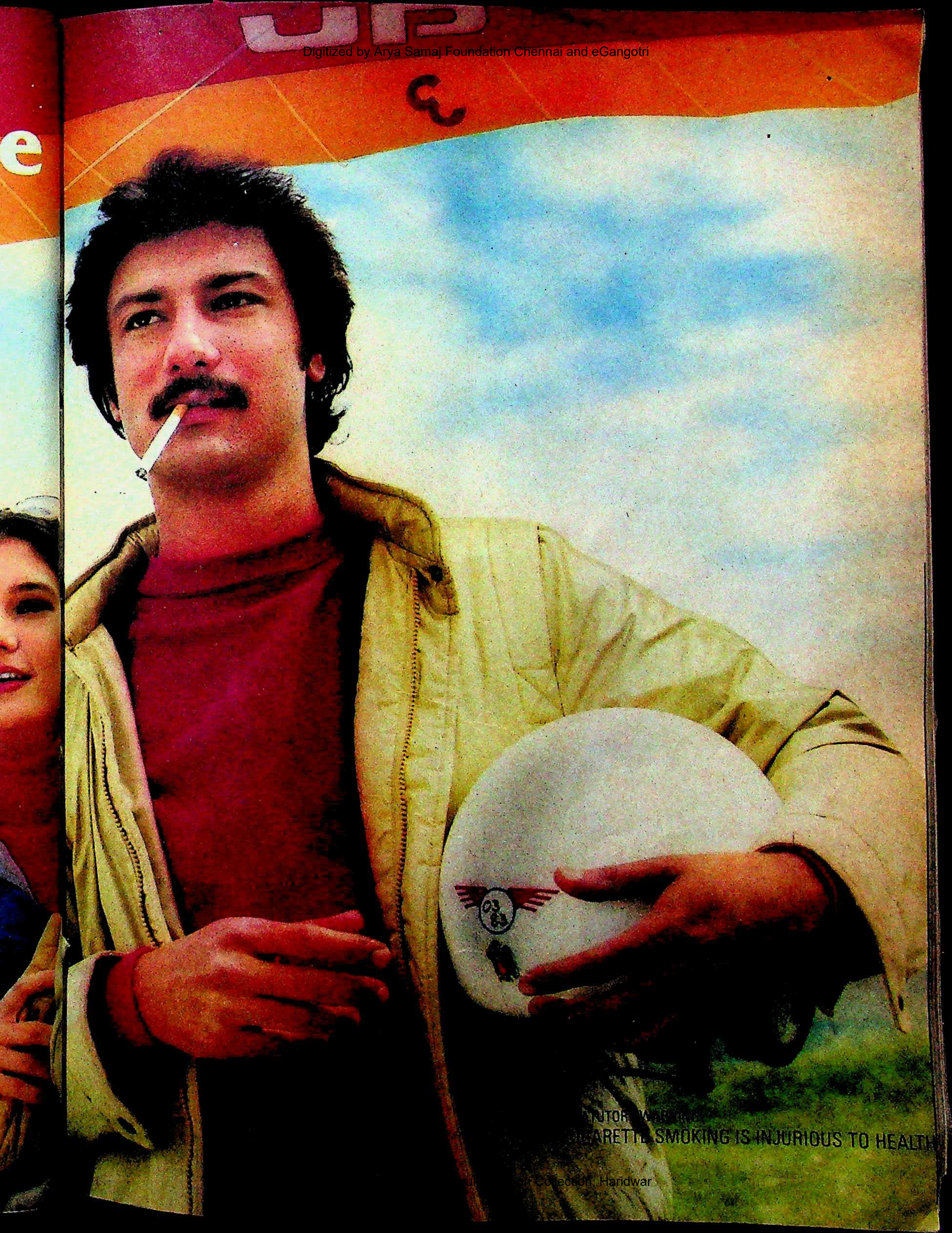
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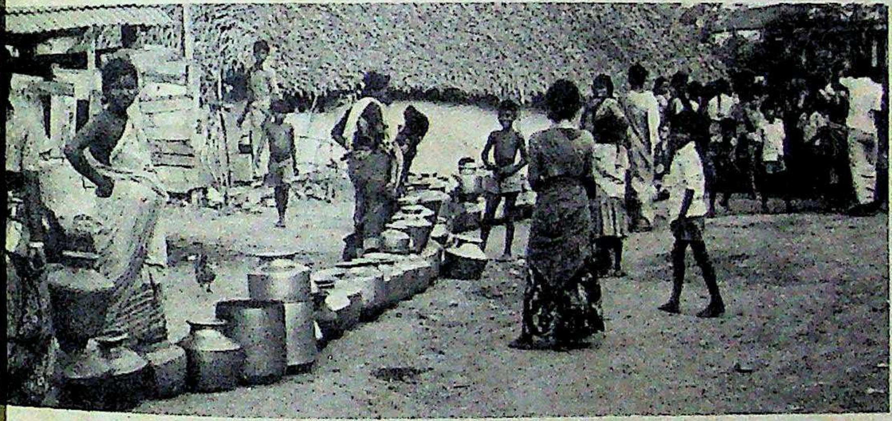

Slum dwellers queueing up for water: parched existence

HE COMING summer months are bound to be agonisingly long and dry for the unfortunate residents of ras. Last fortnight, the water levels meted alarmingly low in the coastal storage tanks, as the Madras opolitan Water Supply and Sewerage d was summoned to restrict the supply ater to alternate days as an emergency ure. The water crisis is unprecedented in memory.

Even the summer of 1975, an earlier sion when Madras had to content itself alternate day's water supply, when gency evacuation plans had to be drawn case the worst happened, seems better pared to the grim crisis which stalks the oday. With schools and colleges having nced their summer vacations by two ths from June to April, and the water in the storage tanks touching rock-om, the state Government has been ually apathetic to the situation.

Red Hills, Cholavaram and Poondi, the storage reservoirs which cater to the supply of the city have now only an ning one-tenth of their normal storage. the normal storage level helps maintain pply of only half the estimated water rements of Madras. In the best of times, y gets a supply of 40 million gallons of a day compared to a demand of almost that amount. The situation is so pre-us that even with the current strategy of nate day's supply, present storage will ut probably until May.

Apathetic Politicians: With local poli-s busy campaigning for the hendur by-election to the Tamil Nadu mbly, the residents of the city are pray-or the summer rains to come. In the ce of any concrete action they are hoping that their only saviour against a possible drought will be the rains. Said a disgusted young slum dweller: "Damn the politicians. We poor will die if the providential rains don't come." The young woman is a resident of Egmore, the city's thickly populated and one of the worst affected areas. Velankanni, another young woman of the same area said: "They said water will be supplied on alternate days, but four days have gone by and there isn't the slighest feeling of moistness in the taps. I don't know how we are going to survive, panting half a mile everytime to get even as much as a glass of water to drink."

The story seems to be similar in the middle class and wealthy areas. Says an anguished middle-aged engineering inspector at the Chintadripet High School: "I lie awake all night waiting for a trickle of water to emerge from the tap. And if it does we have to scurry around and try to fill in as many buckets and pots as we can. I am exhausted by this exercise."

Ironically, house rents are crashing in Anna Nagar, a posh residential colony on the north-western fringe of Madras, because of a severe water crisis in that area. Said Dr S.H.A. Krishna: "Whatever little water we get is muddy. Even in 1975 it wasn't so bad." Office-going people are as much affected by the situation as others. They complain that they avoid drinking water outside as it might be contaminated and lead to disease.

With the crisis assuming horifying proportions it is doubtful whether the machinery of the state Government, which is moving at an alarmingly slow pace, will quench the thirst of the suffering millions of the city. And more than ever the residents are all praying for the drops of water to fall from the heavens.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

Charting

IT HAS intimations of an epic Greek drama, with a hundred characters, draped in appropriate robes of non-alignment, searching for a relevant role in the hazy whirlpool of world politics. It is also the largest and most glittering extravaganza of international politics to be held on the rugged soil of Delhi. As the maiden breeze of spring wafts lazily in India's sun-splashed capital and the first leaves quietly sprout on trees made naked by an unusually cold winter, presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers of 100 nations will engage in long, intense, multi-channelled exchanges of situations, gestures, speeches, polemics—and also perceptions and ideas.

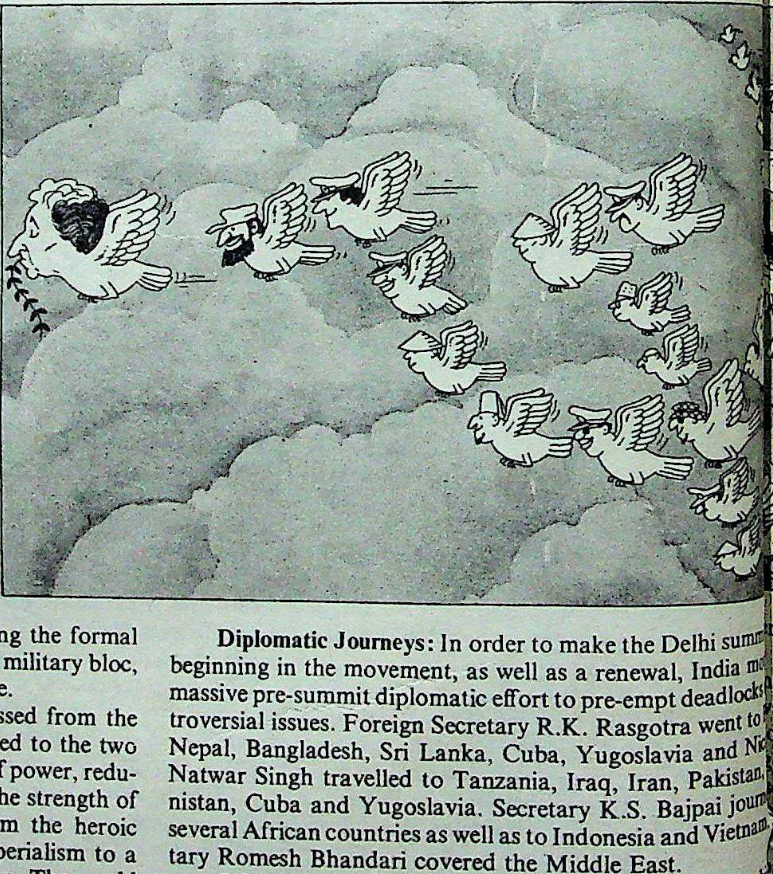
Non-alignment, translated into five languages, will impress the global audience as a developed contrast between mask and face; at other times, as a collective grouping of two-thirds of the family of nations for exits from the many ills and perils that afflict them and the rest of mankind. India, given for the first time formal leadership of a movement it had fathered, along with others, 21 years ago, will be expected to relight a flame which got nearly quenched somehow, somewhere in the crowded corridors of contemporary history.

Once upon a time, at the dawn of the distant '60s, was born a movement of newly-liberated nations in Asia and Africa flaunting in the face of two power blocs the twin proud flags of independence and development. It was as if the artist in the awakened soul of an unbound Prometheus united himself with the formless fluids of time to create a new wave of history. The Non-aligned Movement (NAM) was launched by a small cohesive group of 25 nations on the first day of September 1961 at their first summit in Belgrade. Today, two score and more years—and six summits— later, NAM has drawn almost 100 member-nations plus some 40 observers and guests representing four continents. What once used to be a platform of like-minded nations, blood brothers in the mighty anti-imperialist struggles and national liberation movements of '50s and '60s has now become a fat, flabby and fractious extended family of cousins thrice removed, all of them fulfilling the formal criteria of membership, that they belong to no formal military bloc, whatever their bilateral defence arrangements may be.

Transformations: Meanwhile, the world has passed from the Cold War through detente to a new cold war confined to the two superpowers. Bipolarity has yielded to many centres of power, reducing the political might of the strong and increasing the strength of the weak. The developing nations have passed from the heroic glamour of political liberation from the yoke of imperialism to a complex self-limiting phase of national reconstruction. The world economy has driven itself into tunnel after tunnel of recession and inflation. And with the advent of the '80s, a well-concerted move to militarise the planet, even push it mindlessly into nuclear war, is pitted against a groundswell of anti-nuclear war and peace movements in the industrial nations of the West.

Paradoxically, NAM has attained a spatial expansion that would have astonished its founding fathers, including Jawaharlal Nehru; at the same time, it has lost its cohesion and unity of objectives and purposes, and is unable to cope with the critical problems and issues that cry out for urgent solutions. Indeed, for most of the last s NAM has been seized with a schizophrenia which has left i language of a poet, "with no desire to act, yet a loathin action/A fear of the vacuum, and no desire to fill it."

The seventh NAM summit in New Delhi will probably a drift to some extent. That, at any rate, is the hope and purpo peripatetic diplomats who were entrusted with the task of the way for it. South Block's top five officials barely paused extensive consultation travels between November 1982 a ruary 1983, visiting 35 international capitals, many more th to solicit views and iron out possible wrinkles in the main t the summit's deliberations. Said K. Natwar Singh, secretary- designate of the conference: "This prior consultation h before been so extensive. Wherever we went we were able to heads of state or government, that is, presidents an ministers."



Diplomatic Journeys: In order to make the Delhi summ beginning in the movement, as well as a renewal, India m massive pre-summit diplomatic effort to pre-empt deadlocks troversial issues. Foreign Secretary R.K. Rasgotra went to Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Yugoslavia and Ni Natwar Singh travelled to Tanzania, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, nistan, Cuba and Yugoslavia. Secretary K.S. Bajpai journ several African countries as well as to Indonesia and Vietnam. tary Romesh Bhandari covered the Middle East.

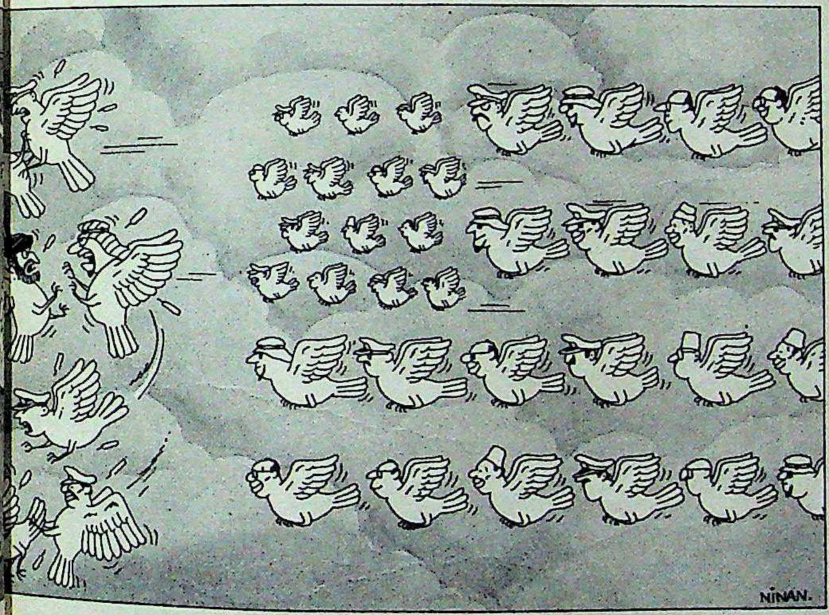
Others who pitched in were Dr Teja, Vijay Namb Ramesh Mulay. Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao we United Nations to join a meeting of the Coordinating Burea Managua, Nicaragua, to attend a conference of non-aligned ministers to consider the problems of Central America. Lead veral non-aligned countries came to New Delhi to discuss is problems likely to figure at the summit.

The frenetic activity was necessitated not only by the sh that India was given to prepare for the summit—four month of the usual three years—it was also due to the high expecta

ng New Course

ummit has aroused. Even as he warns of the problems facing the ement, former foreign minister Shyam Nandan Mishra of the Dal, who represented India at the Havana conclave in 1979, : "India is looked upon with great respect and the non-aligned ement expects that under the chairmanship of India the movet would be able to resolve some of its problems and go further on scending curve."

K.P. Mishra of the School of International Studies at Delhi's aharlal Nehru University is more forthright: "It seems to me that India's task to restore the credibility and credit of the movement. basic task is to concentrate on those issues which are vital, tal and historical, and concern every member of the community. a restoration of priorities and it is this which will test India's skill, tical and diplomatic." Mishra has in mind the problems of the al arms race and the global economic crisis. But he also gnises the increased divisions within the movement which arose r Cuba's assumption of its leadership in 1979.



Revolutionary Fervour: From Havana to New Delhi is seen by y non-aligned countries as more than a transition. When ana was fixed as the venue of the sixth NAM summit at the fifth in ombo in 1976, the Cuban role in the southern African states of ola and Mozambique was far from clear. In 1979, Cuba was seen everal non-aligned nations in Africa and elsewhere as a revonary power ready to despatch its troops to help national liberastruggles led by leftist groups in crucial third world regions. And a was not alone in NAM. It was one of 12 countries of "socialist ntation" closely tied to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. ham was still wearing the halo of its great victory over the United es.

When Cuba, Vietnam and their allies successfully pressed at the ana NAM summit for the adoption of phrases in the political aration that could be interpreted as recognising the non-aligned ement as an organic limb of world-wide anti-imperialist and alist struggles led by the USSR, a large number of non-aligned ntries got quite alarmed. They saw the non-aligned movement being hijacked by a cohesive determined group of revolutionary regimes to an ideological destination not in tune with the true centrist spirit of non-alignment.

India was represented at Havana by the foreign minister of a lame-duck government in New Delhi headed by Chaudhuri Charan Singh and it was left to an ageing but still stubborn Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia to doggedly fight to keep NAM close to the centre of world politics, with only tepid, clumsy help from the Indian team. The political content of the Havana declaration bore the unmistakable imprint of a compromise between Tito and Fidel Castro, who embraced each other in the glare of television cameras after hours and hours of hard and often bitter bargaining.

Untenable Position: But Cuba's ascendency was short-lived. By floating the idea that the Soviet Union was a "natural ally" of the non-aligned countries, Cuba contributed to stamping a pro-Soviet tilt on the movement—upsetting a substantial segment of it. Ironically, the Cuban position became untenable within months when the Red Army stormed its way into Afghanistan. Non-alignment has always had a strong anti-imperialist content. It was, after all, the western world which held the resources and political control which the newly emerged nations wanted. The United States and Western Europe were also seen as defenders and protectors of neo-colonial interests in the developing countries and of aggressive racist regimes like South Africa and Israel. This was reflected in the declarations adopted at successive NAM summits. The Soviet Union was hardly ever criticised by name, except at the first summit at Belgrade, which had as backdrop the testing of a giant nuclear bomb by Moscow.

This stance changed in December 1979 when the Soviets were brought to the dock for their intervention in Afghanistan. So was Vietnam for sending its troops into Kampuchea to overthrow the brutal regime of Pol Pot. And the movement could hardly overlook the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea.

At the United Nations, a majority of non-aligned nations condemned Moscow for its Afghan action; with the votes of a majority of non-aligned nations, the Kampuchean seat at the UN went to the rag-tag regime-in-exile headed by Pol Pot—later by Prince Norodom Sihanouk—and kept alive with largesse extended by China, Thailand, Singapore, and the US.

THE ANTI-Soviet mood of a majority of non-aligned nations prevailed at the New Delhi meeting of NAM foreign ministers in February 1981. Despite India's best efforts, the movement as a whole shifted to the right. India had to agree to the deletion of a specific reference to Diego Garcia in the Delhi declaration's references to great power rivalries in the Indian Ocean. The movement's shift to the right increased its attraction for several West European powers. French President François Mitterrand, for instance, wished to get France accepted as an observer. The United States began for the first time to look at non-alignment with eyes misty with affection.

The vast majority of non-aligned nations expect India to correct the movement's leftward and rightward deviations and bring it back to the centre of international affairs. In other words, restore the original balance between two superpowers. Says A.P. Rana of the

Political Science Department, M.S. University, Baroda: "A greater sense of realism is likely to prevail as a result of India having the opportunity to supervise and guide the movement in the next three years."

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INDIA means to meet this expectation. After a long series of discussions with non-aligned governments in four continents, India has carefully crafted three principal themes for the New Delhi summit. These themes—peace, disarmament and development—are capsule concerns and anxieties shared by all non-aligned nations and therefore can restore NAM's largely lost sense of community. They also link NAM to the central issues of world politics in the '80s. Peace has always been the first priority of NAM; it was created with the primary purpose of preventing the new nations from being sucked into the all-consuming cold war of the powe

Now, once again, the planet has been pushed into awesome arms race, nuclear and conventional; men in high are talking glibly about fighting and winning nuclear wars; ar trol and disarmament has disappeared from the agenda world's number one power. At the same time, popular prote ments are swelling up in the United States and Western demanding a nuclear freeze, a ban on first nuclear strike testing of nuclear weapons and genuine progress in the stall tiations on arms control. The world's military expenditure ha led to an incredible $600 billion every year, and nearly one this crushing burden has fallen on the economically feeble s of developing nations.

Indian Draft: In a significant departure from the politic

ORGANISATION

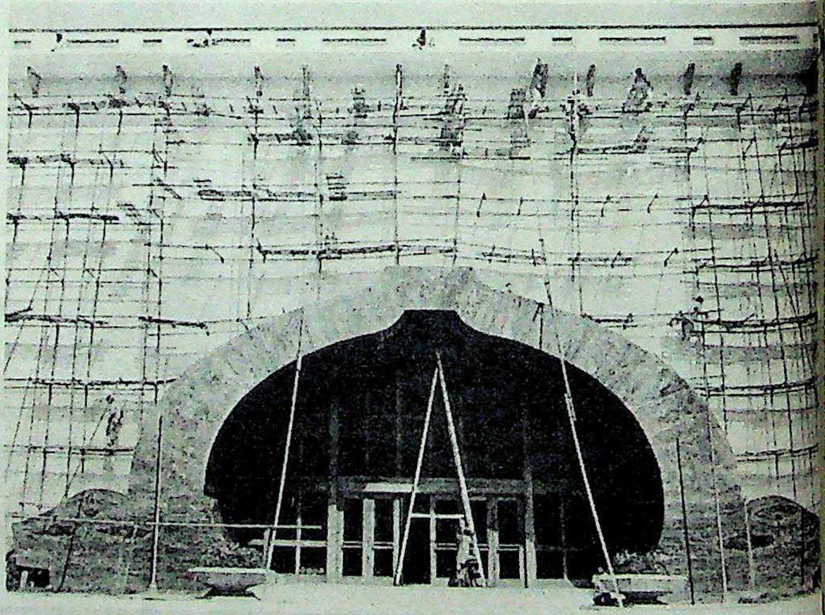
A Massive Exercise

VIGYAN Bhavan, scene of scores of international conferences, hasn't quite seen such action before. Nor has it had such an extensive and thorough refurbishing of image and facilities. As the main venue for the seventh Non-aligned Meet (NAM), the country's major conference centre in a shady, tree-lined avenue in the heart of the capital, has been buzzing with activity for months. Behind its freshly-painted white facade is not only the mammoth 1,200-seater plenary hall, the four committee rooms, three cafetarias, the documentation and translation centre and the press room but also the NAM's organising secretariat which, in a record four months, has put together one of the biggest shows ever held in India.

Says NAM's Secretary-General K. Natwar Singh: "Our biggest achievement has been to get the conference going at such short notice. Normally it would take a host country over a year to prepare for such an enormous exercise: we've managed in an amazingly brief period to complete arrangements for a show that is going to be twice the size of the last non-aligned meeting in Havana. In Havana, 52 heads of state attended. In New Delhi there will be nearly 80." And unlike last year's sports spectacular, Asiad '82, which was a public event designed to attract as wide a viewing audience as possible, NAM is a high security-risk meeting of a 80 heads of state—prime ministers, presidents and kings—to be held strictly behind closed doors.

The NAM secretariat's primary effort has been channelised in Natwar Singh's words to "ensure that as few people as possible see what is essentially a working summit". With 140 delegations (97 member countries, 18 observer countries and 24 guest countries) participating, and the number of delegates varying from 15 to over 150 per country, the job of setting up an infrastructure of tight security, transportation, accommodation, communication and simultaneous translation in four languages has been stupendous.

Restrictions: In addition to servicing the needs of 4,000 delegates efficiently, there is a media contingent of over 1,000 correspondents who have to be housed, fed, briefed and controlled. For them the main halls of Vigyan Bhavan will be out-of-bounds territory, with access only to the building's annexe where extensive press facilities—about two dozen telephone booths, typewriters and teleprinters—as well as a brand new cafeteria managed by the India Tour Development Corporation (ITDC) been set up.



HARI OM GULATI

Vigyan Bhavan receives a face lift . . .

Says Mani Shanker Aiyar, joint retary, External Publicity Divis whose job it has been to provide monitor all press arrangements: " have to meet criteria for security that only we think are adequate but w security agencies of other countries consider adequate. So we are going have to ask the press to put up with s restrictions which we don't normally them to put up with."

When the conference opens on morning of March 7, and the 80 head state are seated on the red velvet chair the podium of the plenary hall again backdrop of brown velvet drapes. media will be accommodated in the h balcony—only photographers and vision cameramen—to record the e So many are expected to be there, adopted at Havana, India has proposed that the New Delhi it call for an end to great power confrontation and cold war, freeze-on the production, development, stockpiling and deploy- of nuclear weapons and immediate resumption of arms control isarmament negotiations. The Indian draft rejects all theories oncepts of limited nuclear war. It links the great power military up and confrontation to policies of "destabilisation and occu- n" directed primarily against non-aligned nations. Preoccupa- with doctrines of strategic balance and deterrence feeds the deve- countries' unwillingness to look at the world's economic ills in totality.

This has further aggravated the inequalities and injustice in national economic relations. The social and economic conse- ces of the arms race block the emergence of a new international economic order. Only a thorough reshaping of the present world economic order can ensure lasting peace, security and prosperity of all nations. Hence the urgency to arrest the drift to war and support efforts for peace exerted by men and women everywhere in the world.

In a separate draft statement for consideration at the New Delhi summit, India has linked the non-aligned nations' struggle for a better economic deal to the overriding imperatives of peace and disarmament. The 57-page draft warns that the deepening world economic crisis is "threatening to engulf the whole world in a great economic depression like that of the early thirties". It notes with "extreme disquiet" that the global economic crisis has meshed with an "alarming deterioration in international relations."

The prolonged recession and overkill measures to control inflation have created massive unemployment even in the developed

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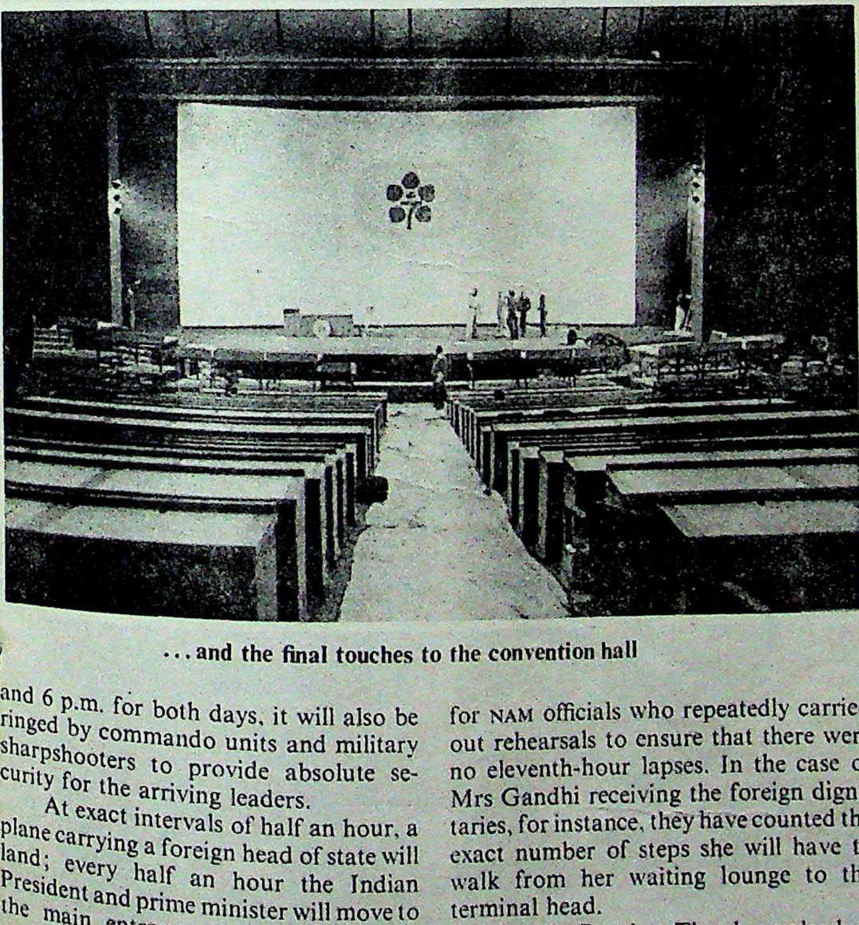
they will only be permitted to shoot for a few minutes in rotation.

Meticulous Timing: Before the conference actually commences on March 7, the Indian President and prime minister will be in attendance for two days—March 5 and 6—to personally receive each head of state as his plane lands at the newly-constructed and renovated terminal at Palam Airport. While the airport itself will be shut down for all commercial traffic, domestic and international, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. for both days, it will also be ringed by commando units and military sharpshooters to provide absolute security for the arriving leaders.

At exact intervals of half an hour, a plane carrying a foreign head of state will land; every half an hour the Indian President and prime minister will move to the main entrance to receive him; in precisely half an hour the customs and security staff will be expected to clear passports, health papers and baggage and deposit the entire delegation into waiting cars to be taken to its hotel. The same procedure will be followed for two days when the conference ends and the delegations depart, and a special military band is currently rehearsing the national anthems of 97 countries, the musical scores of all of which aren't readily available here.



...and the final touches to the convention hall

Timing such a meticulously-orchestrated exercise has been a major headache for NAM officials who repeatedly carried out rehearsals to ensure that there were no eleventh-hour lapses. In the case of Mrs Gandhi receiving the foreign dignitaries, for instance, they have counted the exact number of steps she will have to walk from her waiting lounge to the terminal head.

Precise Routine: They have also had to time how long it will take a hotel elevator carrying a head of state from his floor to the lobby—at the Taj Mahal Hotel it takes exactly 10-and-a-half seconds—for him to make it on time for his meeting at Vigyan Bhavan where he must arrive precisely on schedule at intervals of a few seconds. Some 1,638 rooms have been booked in four of the capital's five-star hotels to accommodate the heads of states and parts of their delegations. These four, which include the Taj, Ashok, Oberoi, and the Maurya-Sheraton will be sealed off for the public completely for the duration of the conference. The ITDC's Kanishka will house delegations of guest and observer countries and will be accessible to the public. About 800 additional rooms have been taken up at the Asian Games Village at Siri Fort to accommodate more conference delegates; and another 800 have been requisitioned in other hotels like the Samrat for the foreign media teams.

"At first it was difficult to get the hotels to agree to close to the public completely for the conference but once it was explained that all their restaurants, public areas and facilities would be in constant use by the resident delegates and, if anything, the hotel take-over could be more than profitable, the hotels agreed," says S.K. Lambah, deputy secretary-general of NAM. Since most delegations are expected to host formal and informal luncheons and banquets for each other, the hotel's catering staff and kitchens will be in round the clock operation.

Still, several security precautions have been taken. Each hotel will be "swept" by intelligence and bomb dispersal units of the army, every now and again. Hotel kitchens have been provided with laboratories to check out every morsel of food a head of state or delegate will consume, to prevent anything from food poisoning to intentional poisoning.

Each hotel and Vigyan Bhavan will be equipped with a doctor and nurse on countries and generated a climate of trade war and protectionism. The Indian draft underlines the early need for resumption of global negotiations, and calls upon non-aligned countries to make more vigorous efforts for self-reliance and South-South cooperation.

Looking Westward: If the Indian draft makes any radical departure from the past in both the political and economic sections it is in making common cause with the people of the West. Significantly, and for the first time, the draft takes note of the widespread popular opposition in the West to nuclear arms and the vast demonstrations that have been occurring in recent months calling on the US and the Soviet Union to pull back from their hectic arms race. And, in the economic section, the draft recognises that the rich and the poor countries must swim or sink together; no recovery is possible among developed countries if the developing are lagging, and the developing economies are not likely to make all that much headway un western economies put their own houses in order. "It is the fir that the non-aligned movement is actively trying to cultivate a tuency in the West," says K. Subrahmanyam, director of the I of Defence Studies and Analyses.

If the Indian draft on economic issues has followed c tional wisdom inherited from the preceding summits at H Colombo and Algiers, it is because sharp differences exist non-aligned countries on several issues relating to North-Sou tions. The oil-producing non-aligned countries are obviously difficult times. The world political environment has become i ingly hostile to meaningful global economic negotiations. A large number of non-aligned countries are helplessly depend the international capitalist system. They are reluctant to do an

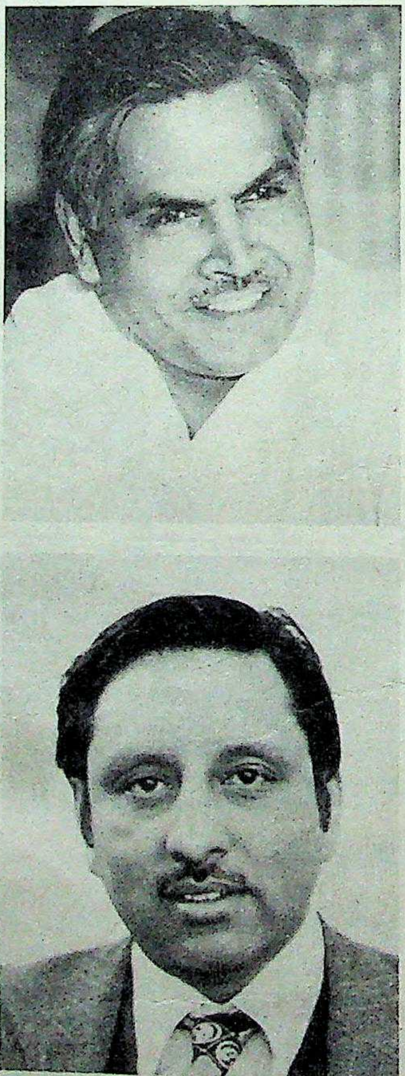
24-hour duty as well as an ambulance; a room converted into an Overseas Communication Service (OCS) control room; a police security control room and a protocol section. Over 20 rooms in every hotel will be occupied by intelligence officials. And 12 rooms will be reserved at Willingdon Hospital for any emergency cases.

Shared Expenses: Since it is impossible for the Indian Government to foot the bill for all the delegates—delegations from Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Yugoslavia are expected to consist of over 150 members each—the NAM secretariat has decided to pay for one hotel suite for each head of state and spouse, and for 15 other rooms per member country. It will provide one bullet-proof Mercedes—45 are being specially imported to supplement the existing fleet in India—for each head of state and five Ambassador cars for the rest of the delegation.

Any additional expenditure, for boarding and lodging, transport and security as well as liaison personnel, will have to be made by the delegations or their missions in New Delhi. Although NAM officials have not been able to collate costs of any kind—many of the facilities have been provided by various departments of the Government or government-owned corporations—they claim that the conference will also be a considerable foreign exchange earner.

YET ONE of the secretariat's major problems till the last minute will be to find out exactly how many delegates are to arrive. Says Natwar Singh: "We still don't know how many members there will be in some delegations, or who they will be. We can't afford to get any detail, like their names or their designations, wrong. So we have to provide for a safety margin, just as we have to allow for delays of all kinds in our minute-by-minute schedule."

"In Saudi Arabia," adds a Ministry of External Affairs official, "time moves when the King does, so we have to make sure that there are enough of our men to keep the foreign heads of state as close to schedule as possible." Each head of s will be accompanied by one Indian curity officer and three heavily ar guards—in addition to as many of t own personal security men as they ch to bring though without autom weapons—and also one aide-de-ca and each delegation will have one In liaison officer to assist it, monitor aid, supervise its timings.



Natwar Singh (above) and Aiyar: efficient preparations

Elaborate Arrangement: Altho the heads of state will ride to Vig Bhavan in their bullet-proof Merce traffic will have to be cleared ahead them, and their arrival and depar from the main venue be timed exactl it is at Palam Airport. All delegates use cars provided—some 1,100 cars be mobilised altogether—but the m will travel in 60 special buses which ferry them from their hotels and o rendezvous points to Vigyan Bhavan back at regular intervals.

If a member of the press wishes to in touch with a delegate he will do either through the press officer (e delegation has been invited to nomi one such press officer) or through computer which will record a requ route it to a terminal at the appropr hotel, pass it on to the press officer, will be obliged to reply via the comp to the concerned correspondent.

Varied Accommodation: To m matters simpler for delegates as well the media, delegations will be acc modated in alphabetical order in hotels—the Government-run Ash Hotel, for instance, will house about delegations from "A" to "K" start with Afghanistan. With the exception countries at war like Iran and Iraq wh have been placed in separate hotels. alphabetical precedent will be follow down to the room numbers of the ho

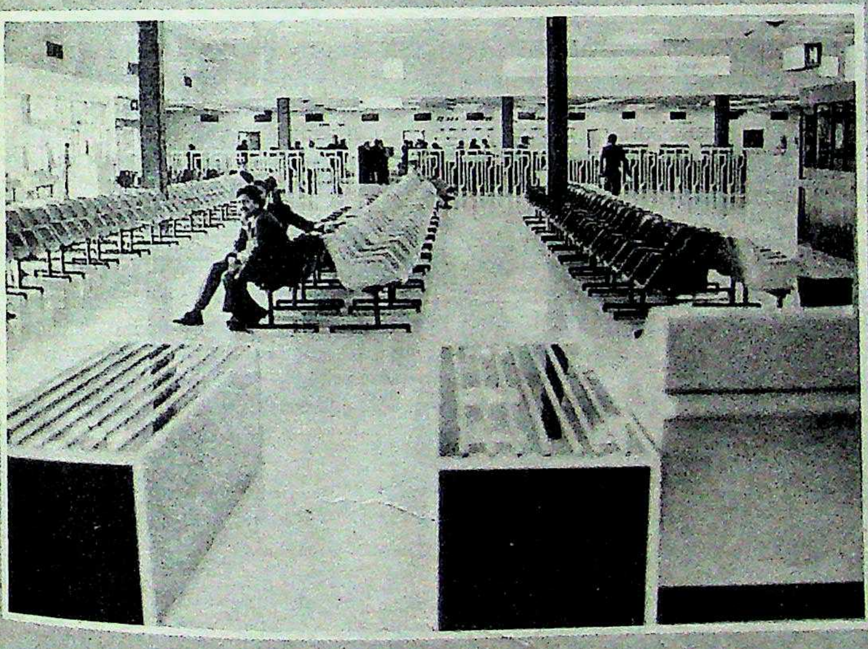
Several member countries who h objected to the varying standards of capital's hotels—the Ashok, for exam can hardly compete with the may further injure their already imperilled economies.

ndian planners of the seventh NAM summit hope that the gn ministers and the heads of state or government will have ient time to consider economic issues with the seriousness they nd. "We shall be open to new ideas, concepts and action plans," rked an official of the External Affairs Ministry. Unfortunately, many governments have made substantive comments on the n draft, indicating a certain emptiness of ideas and alternatives e South. Even then, decisions taken at the New Delhi summit have a strong impact on the sixth session of UNCTAD in Belgrade July, bringing together the Group of 77 (G-77) which has now me G-122, all but 30 of the members being non-aligned.

Seminal Reports: The summit, however, will have at least two authoritative documents to draw upon if it were to give serious thought to North-South or global economic issues. First, the new report of the Brandt Commission released on February 9, with an obvious intent to influence the thinking of non-aligned nations. It calls for an "emergency programme" to avert world economic collapse, and warns that worsening economic conditions pose a threat to political stability of developing countries and that a further decline would lead to "disintegration of societies and anarchy". Second, a statement on North-South economic strategy issued on February 5 by a group of distinguished academics and policy makers in the light of deliberations at a January conference in New Delhi on 'Rethinking Global Negotiations'.

The statement puts forward three specific proposals in an "urgent appeal" to the NAM summit: the South suspends for the time being all attempts at launching global negotiations because the

Mahal—will have to be satisfied with the major structural and redecoration cha-ges being completed in older, down-at-eel hotels like the Ashok and the Oberoi, here the suites are being overhauled ompletely. Each head of state's suite will e equipped with a hotline to his country. pecial telephone links to the plenary hall nd instant connections world-wide th-ough the hotel telephone exchange. imilar facilities, including telex, will be rovided in the press wing of Vigyan Bhavan. Vigyan Bhavan itself has had a 1,200-line telephone exchange recently installed.



The newly spruced up Palam Airport lounge

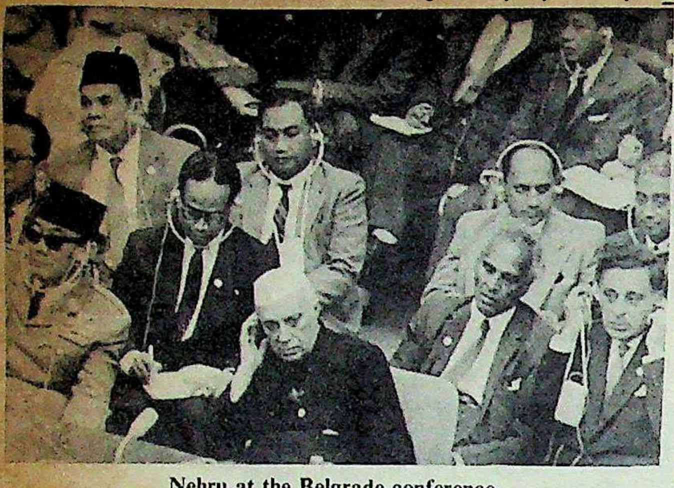
Security Risks: Although NAM's Chief Security Officer, Dr K.V.H. Padmanabhan, a police officer of inspector-general rank refuses to go on record till the summit is over, it is known that he has been hosting the visits of at least 50 security delegations from member countries to discuss security hazards of certain leaders: about a dozen of the visiting heads of state are considered prime assassination targets. Among them: leaders from Cuba, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan and Turkey. The risk has been so high that even the hospital rooms reserved for medical emergencies have been proofed with bullet-resistant glass. Altogether, it is estimated that as many as 5,000 personnel are involved in security control.

While security remains one of the biggest headaches for the NAM secretariat, the other has been organising the best translation, interpretation and documentation facilities available in the world. Catering to the four official languages of the conference—English, French, Spanish and Arabic—some 200 of the world's speediest translators and interpreters have been employed through an England-based agency. Criticism of hiring a foreign agency is countered by NAM officials who claim that few Indian translators are of international standard. They reached this conclusion after testing the skills of available Indian translators and interpreters and decided to rely upon the services of a reputable foreign agency which provides people for most international conferences—and handled the Havana summit, for example.

Paper Deluge: Nearly all the translators—who will have to translate speeches, resolutions and all documents within minutes of their release—have been flown out from abroad and put up by the Indian Government. Another 150 people have been hired as supervisors, revisers and document distributors. Their job will be to process all three sessions of the daily meeting (from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 1 a.m). and keep the estimated 5 million pieces of paper that are to be used during the conference, flowing. Aiding them in the massive documentation exercise are half a dozen huge photocopying machines, each of which produces 150 copies a minute. Two have been borrowed from the ITDC and the rest rented from Xerox.

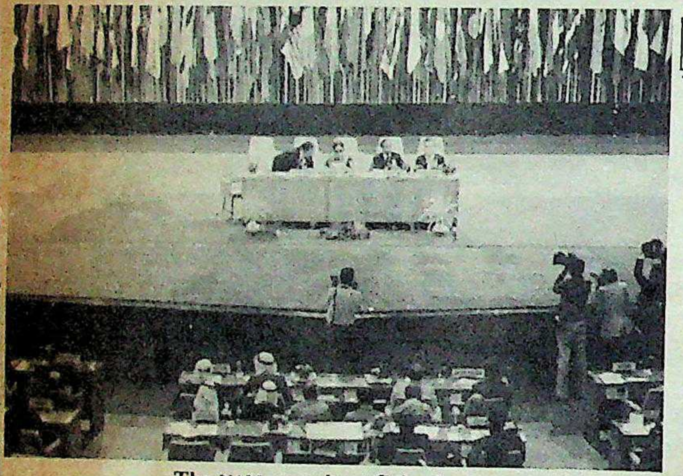
Amazingly, the total organisation secretariat of NAM consists of under 100 people mostly Ministry of External Affairs officials including some 20 Indian Foreign Service probationers who are operating as full-fledged officers. In effect, however, several thousand people have been mobilised for the conference. "Without their services it would have been impossible to get on with the job," says NAM's secretary-general. "Because if the conference is a success, it will prove that the resourcefulness, enthusiasm and dogged hard work of the Indian bureaucracy, from the police to the airline staff, from customs officials to caterers, cannot be underestimated. Once bureaucracy moves, it can create wonders."

—SUNIL SETHI



Nehru at the Belgrade conference

1961

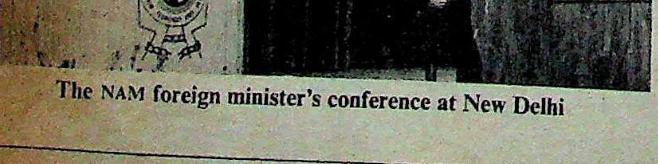


The NAM summit at Colombo

1976

Tito and Castro at Havana

1979



The NAM foreign minister's conference at New Delhi

1981

economic and political scales are now heavily w against the developing nations; instead of global ne tions, joint North-South programmes are initiated medium-term improvement in global economic relations; a South "immediately seizes" the opportunity provided by the R Administration to organise and actively participate in a new national monetary conference.

"On political issues, there will be sharp controversies i Delhi, but probably—and hopefully—not as bitter and abra we saw at the February 1981 foreign ministers' conference, and hope that eventually a broad non-aligned consensus will eme all controversial issues." With these cautious words an outlines India's perception of the debates at the summit th inevitably make world headlines and television clips. The draft political statement is a fascinating exercise in what m called "diplomacy of the centre". Moderate in tone, its main th to find positions that would unite rather than divide conte non-aligned nations.

The Indian draft places controversial political issues Afghanistan, Kampuchea, the Indian Ocean and the dle East in the context of great power confrontatio the global economic crisis. Implicit in this approach attempt to play down the intra-regional edges of these issues, treat them as regional manifestations of great power confront This approach springs from one of the enshrined principles go ing the non-aligned movement: disputes and conflicts betwee among non-aligned nations must not divert NAM's attention global problems and diminish its impact on resolution of cleavages.

Pragmatic View: In formulating NAM positions on contro regional issues, India has broadly tried to avoid, except by cation, blaming specifically either superpower. India has also tr focus on how to resolve current problems rather than on how whom these have been created. Thus on Afghanistan, which is p in the regional context of South-west Asia, the emphasis in the I draft is on a comprehensive political settlement and on the effo the UN secretary-general to coax an agreement out of the three tries directly involved: Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

The emphasis on the UN effort is a significant d ture from the statement adopted by non-aligned fo ministers in February 1981. It reflects the positive which have appeared in the last 12 months. The Indian draft the New Delhi summit to welcome "the positive approach manifested by the parties concerned" and to urge them "to p these efforts sincerely and purposefully in the larger interest of national peace".

The formulation on Afghanistan was crafted by Indian of after detailed discussions with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Ir well as several Arab countries. President Zia-ul-Haq assured that he would try his best to enable the Delhi summit to arriv consensus on Afghanistan "by and large on the basis of the I draft". The expectation in New Delhi is that while Pak may raise some semantic objections, it will crea substantive problems. This was confirmed by Pak circles in the capital who said that the Indian formulation di contain anything to which Pakistan could seriously object.

Knotty Issue: Kampuchea will prove to be a more abrasive than Afghanistan. Intense lobbying took place till the end of ruary to get Norodom Sihanouk invited to the New Delhi sum not as head of the coalition government in exile, then as one founding members of NAM. The foreign ministers of Malaysi Indonesia came to New Delhi to plead Sihanouk's case which r ed strong support from China and Pakistan.

India, however, stuck firmly to its decision not to invite Samrin who heads the Vietnam-backed Government of Kamp

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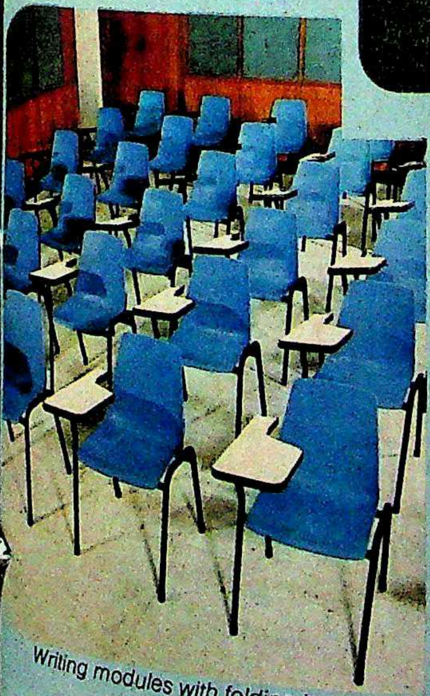

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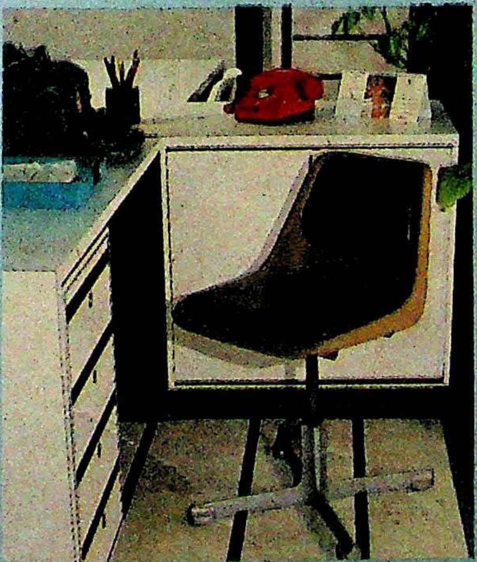

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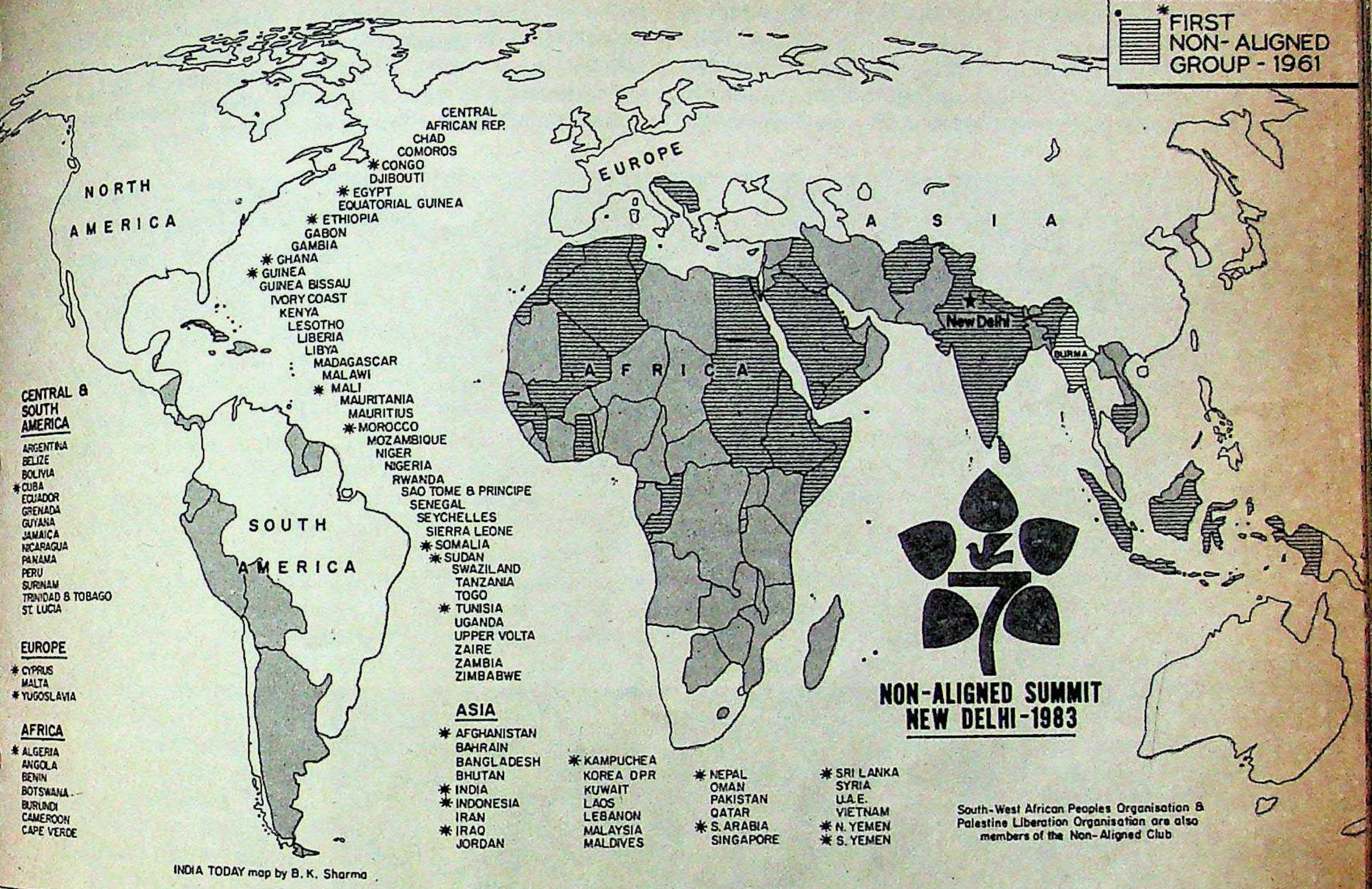
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NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT NEW DELHI-1983
South-West African Peoples Organisation & Palestine Liberation Organisation are also members of the Non-Aligned Club

INDIA TODAY map by B. K. Sharma

or the prince. The three ASEAN members of NAM, supported by a fairly arge number of like-minded countries, will certainly raise the issue of Kampuchean representation in discussions below the summit level, hat is, at meetings of officials and foreign ministers. However, the ndian decision is likely to stand because issues are not decided at non-aligned forums by votes but by consensus.

Disappointed by the Indian decision and unable to change it, the hree ASEAN members, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, will pro- bably ask for a tougher NAM position on the Kampuchean issue than s offered in the Indian draft. This draft calls for a comprehensive political solution which would provide for the withdrawal of "all oreign forces, thus ensuring full respect for sovereignty, indepen- dence and territorial integrity of all states in the region". The people of Kampuchea, it says, have the right to determine their own destiny free from foreign interference, subversion or coercion". It calls for a alogue among all states in South-east Asia leading to mutual nderstanding and "elimination of involvement and threats of inter- ention by outside powers".

Disquieting Presence: On the Indian Ocean, the Indian draft eiterates the NAM call to declare the Ocean a zone of peace and ffirms that "the non-aligned countries are determined to work for he success of the (twice postponed) conference on the Indian Ocean o be held in Sri Lanka in 1984". It views "with disquiet and concern he continuous escalation of great power military presence in the ndian Ocean area including the expansion of the Diego Garcia base, he search for new base facilities and the establishment of new mili- ary command structures of great powers". These activities constitute a threat to the independence, sovereignty, territorial integr and peaceful development of states in the area. The Indian dr extends full support for Mauritian "sovereignty" over the Chag archipelago including Diego Garcia, but does not ask for the retu of the island to Mauritius.

The withdrawal of Soviet naval units from the Indian Ocean early February, followed by a sharp reduction in the number American naval ships in those waters will probably have an imp on the summit's discussion of great power rivalries in the Indi Ocean area. The timing of the action taken by Moscow and Washin ton shows, according to Indian officials, that both superpowers care how the non-aligned nations view their presence in the Indi Ocean. On the eve of the summit, there is cautious optimism in Indian capital that the Reagan Administration may not bring abo a third postponement of the UN-sponsored conference to declare Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

Appeal: The longest formulation in the Indian draft is on Middle East, which incorporates seven principles as the basis fo settlement of the Palestinian question. It calls for "immediate, to and unconditional withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Lebanon. the Iran-Iraq war, it offers no concrete proposals for peace merely appeals to both parties and all other states to "refrain fr any action which would further escalate the conflict and widen scope for outside involvement".

Sharp disagreements will certainly surface at the summit b ween the two mutually opposing blocs in the Middle East: the mo rate bloc headed by Saudi Arabia and the hard line bloc wh cludes Libya, Iran, Algeria, North Yemen, Syria and the Palestine beration Organisation (PLO). However, Indian officials do not pect a deadlock between the two groups. In their perception, the erall political mood in the Middle East has mellowed considerably nce 1981. Unlike in the February 1981 meeting of non-aligned reign ministers, there will be no move at the New Delhi summit to pel Egypt from NAM.

There is evidence that the attitude of the two superpowers has so mellowed. The US in particular has shed some of the prejudice in ewing NAM. The Reagan Administration sent Assistant Secretary of State for International Organisation, G. Newell to Delhi for co sultations on the NAM summit. Newell advised Indian officials th India should play "a moderate role" which meant that the Unit States should not be the specific target for non-aligned invective, n held more responsible than the Soviet Union for the current gre power confrontation. The Reagan Administration can find noth particularly offensive in the Indian draft statements. Indian mod ration will, however, depend on moderation shown by oth including the fairly large number of non-aligned countries w exhibit a certain tilt towards the United States.

THE MOVEMENT

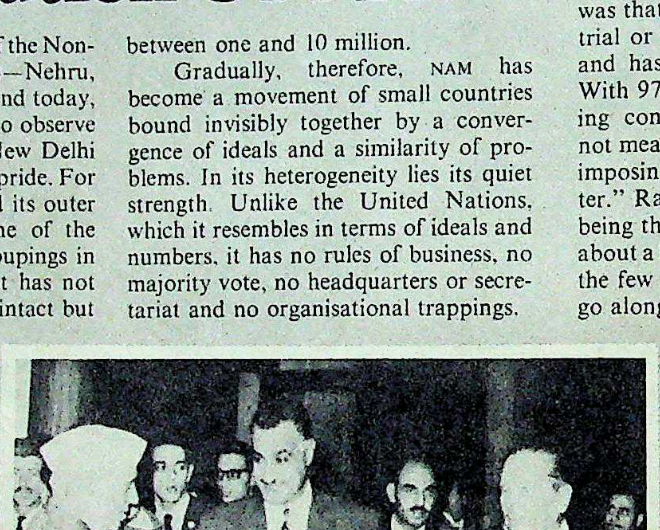
The Evolution Of NAM

IF THE original architects of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM)—Nehru, Nasser and Tito, were around today, they would have good reason to observe next week's deliberations in New Delhi with a fair measure of paternal pride. For all its inner contradictions and its outer flabbiness, NAM represents one of the most durable non-military groupings in history. It is a movement that has not just survived the tests of time intact but has blossomed into one of the most potentially powerful global forces.

At its birth in Belgrade in 1961, NAM was an anachronism, with 25 nations meeting at the height of the Cold War to try and achieve peace and prosperity for their people who then represented one-third of humanity. Today, exactly 21 years later, its membership has swelled to 97 sovereign states—representing two-thirds of the human race. Three more member countries are expected to join NAM in New Delhi. The age of the movement is significant. If 21 years symbolise a coming of age and maturity, nothing embodies that more than NAM.

Changing Character: Till today, only one member—Burma—has resigned its membership and over the years, the face and character of NAM has undergone subtle but significant changes. At Belgrade, the members were individually powerful countries in their own right and only one, Cyprus, had a population of less than 1 million, three were less than 10 million and the rest were above 10 million. Today, of the 97 members, 22 have populations of less than 1 million and five have even less than 200,000 while over 40 countries have population figures varying between one and 10 million.

Gradually, therefore, NAM has become a movement of small countries bound invisibly together by a convergence of ideals and a similarity of problems. In its heterogeneity lies its quiet strength. Unlike the United Nations, which it resembles in terms of ideals and numbers, it has no rules of business, no majority vote, no headquarters or secretariat and no organisational trappings.



Nehru, Nasser and Tito at Belgrade: visionary Founders

And yet, in its unobtrusive way, NAM has maintained its separate identity over the years and its achievements, though largely invisible, are nonetheless considerable. As Dr R.V.R. Chandrashekara, professor of political science in Hyderabad University says: "Over the years, the movement has grown from merely being a forum of non-aligned countries to embrace the entire developing world. It is virtually the Third World United Nations."

Consensus Method: One of the most concise and incisive definitions of NAM was delivered by Indian Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao at the Foreign Policy Association meeting held in Bonn in November 1981. Rao's interpretation was that the movement "is no longer on trial or probation. It is not a monolith and has retained its pluralistic nature. With 97 sovereign states, many professing contrasting ideologies, unity does not mean uniformity and any attempt at imposing uniformity would spell disaster." Rao sees the consensus method as being the most pragmatic since it brings about a large measure of agreement while the few dissenters were also prepared to go along with the majority.

One of the most classic examples of this was the New Delhi Declaration at the conference of foreign ministers of non-aligned countries in February 1981, when the crucial test for the consensus system lay in the final declaration on the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, a NAM member. The Delhi Declaration, which condemned the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and called for a political settlement, eventually had only two items missing that some members had insisted on. One was that the Soviet Union was not mentioned by name in the declaration and the other was that Afghanistan was not referred to as the Democratic People's Republic of Afghanistan.

But NAM, because of its heterogeneity and the diversity of its membership, is also exceedingly vulnerable to outside pressures. An impartial analysis of the membership of NAM reveals that of the 97 current members, exactly 50 can be considered strongly pro-US or dependent on the US for economic or military support. Similarly, the pro-Soviet camp in NAM has about 21 nations that can be categorised so, including Cuba, the outgoing chairman of NAM which was widely

THE SOVIET Union has made no direct lobbying with regard to the New Delhi summit, but has been keeping a close watch on preparations for the summit. Moscow seems to be amply satisfied with the Indian formulations on Afghanistan and Kampuchea. As Leonid Zhegalov put it in a recent issue of *New Times*: "Indian politicians and diplomats are now taking an active part in drafting resolutions for the coming forum and consulting with representatives of other non-aligned countries on a wide range of questions. Some topics, like the so-called Afghan and Kampuchean questions, are tossed in from outside the movement to divert the conference from the discussion of truly burning issues, issues paramount importance for the cause of peace and the developi countries. Delhi's stand on these matters is unambiguous."

Socialist Strategy: INDIA TODAY has learnt from reliable sourc that the new Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, has decided that Mosco should keep a "low profile" at the New Delhi summit through allies and friends like Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique a Ethiopia. These countries will make no attempt to press the conce of "natural alliance" between non-alignment and Marxisn Leninism. They will, however, emphasise the anti-imperialist trac

criticised for veering away from "authentic non-alignment" during its tenure.

BUT NAM also has some unpleasant facets to its character. No less than 26 of its members can be categorised clearly as dictatorships of the military or totalitarian kind. According to Amnesty International ratings for 1982, no less than 72 members have human rights records ranging from bad to unacceptable. And yet, it is a tribute to the resilience of the movement that it has still managed to achieve more success than any other comparable military, economic or political alliance.

Most NAM observers are convinced that the movement has been a major motivating force as well as a pioneer in vital areas of global change. K. Subrahmanyam, head of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, the New Delhi-based think-tank, strongly believes that the changed global strategic picture is very substantially due to the influence of the NAM, which, right from its inception, has focussed a major share of its efforts on two specifics—global peace and the need for disarmament. In the '50s, before the birth of NAM, the map of the world consisted of a huge land mass coloured red comprising the Soviet Union and China surrounded on all sides by nations under external subjugation or members of a larger military alliance.

Today, the military pacts have either been dissolved or are operating in isolation and the tide of colonisation has been turned back. There is strong evidence to suggest that the entire process of decolonisation was speeded up because of the NAM, particularly in Africa which is now almost totally free and a vital force in NAM. Most observers are also convinced that the growth of the movement and its articulations on economic issues accelerated the start of the current dialogue on equitable sharing of resources and development.

Effective Forum: The non-aligned forum was, in fact, where these issues were first raised and brought into international focus. The entire development dialogue starting with UNCTAD and embracing the North-South dialogue followed on the heels of NAM's pronouncements on these issues. In any event, before NAM, organisations like the World Bank were primarily Europe-oriented. The cry for a new international information order raised in Colombo was ridiculed in the beginning but is only now starting to reveal its potential and worth.

Much of NAM's achievements have, unfortunately, been diluted by lofty rhetoric and slightly supercilious phraseology. Again, Afghanistan offers the classic case study. NAM's New Delhi call for a political solution to the Afghanistan crisis and the participation of the involved countries—Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran—in a tripartite discussion to hammer out a solution was rudely brushed aside.

Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq's initial reaction was to convene an Islamic conference to suggest the mobilisation of an Islamic army to counter the threat from the Soviet presence in Kabul.

It was solely because of the NAM's constant urging that the militant tone has been replaced by a more sober and realistic approach and the acceptance of a political solution between the involved countries. The most dramatic example of that change has been Zia himself who has been holding discussions with Moscow and welcoming the UN efforts towards a peaceful and satisfactory solution.

Revised Views: All this has given NAM a prestige and clout that was there earlier but never recognised or channelised properly. The Soviet Union has always made sure it stayed on the right side of NAM and has consistently given it highly vocal support. The West, on the other hand, has not but that attitude is rapidly changing, particularly in Western Europe. The cliche-worn West European view that characterised NAM as an incoherent, polymorphic and ragged grouping riven with clamorous, dissenting factions seems to be gradually but perceptively giving way to a more charitable and less condescending opinion.

Many young Europeans now feel an instantaneous empathy to opinions expressed in NAM forums particularly the view that the community does not believe in the winnability of a limited nuclear war and that in such confrontations there can be no winners and no losers. European political parties of the liberal stripe are also treating one of the principal themes advocated in NAM forums with increased understanding that developmental assistance from a rich nation to a poor one cannot be considered as a process of securing political *quid pro quo*. The fact that the non-aligned nations are simply a political group and not a military alliance like the NATO or the Warsaw Pact nations seems to have finally been rammed home to the rest of the world.

In France, the Delhi summit has created exceptional interest as judged by the discussions on the question of France being granted observer status. The US sent Gregory J. Newell, assistant secretary of state for international organisations, recently to confer with Ministry of External Affairs officials in New Delhi on the questions the NAM summit was expected to take up. Britain has also sent Sir Anthony Aukland, permanent under-secretary in the British Foreign Office on a similar mission. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is sending senior members from the secretariat of the Soviet Communist Party to be present in New Delhi during the summit. The sudden interest in NAM reflects not just the importance of the New Delhi summit but the acceptance that NAM has, finally, come of age.

DILIP BOBB with RAMESH CHANDRAN in Paris

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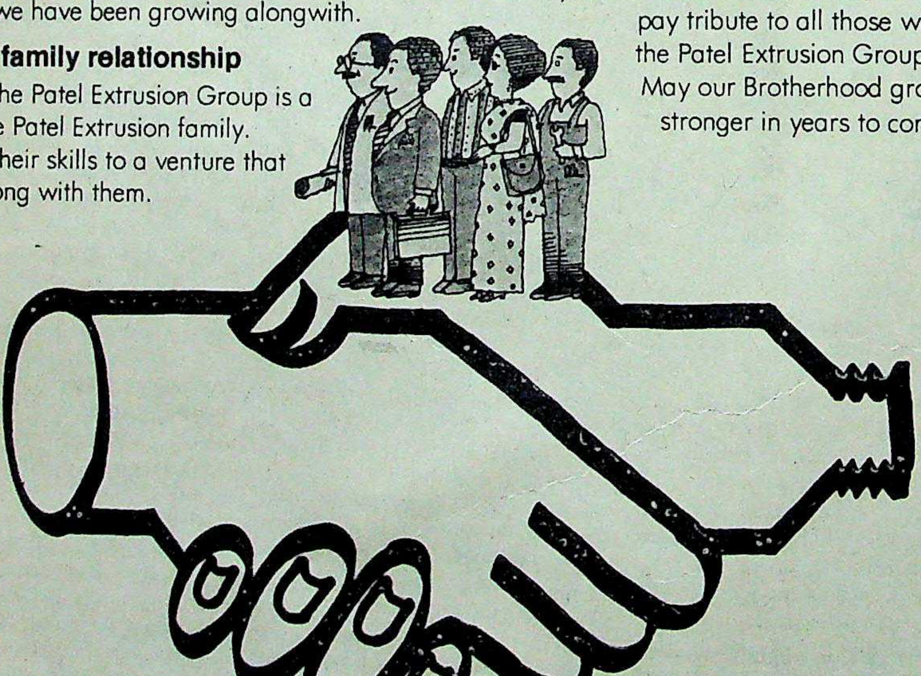

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tion of NAM and will be highly critical of the current US military build-up and policy of confrontation. The Soviet Union will appreciate the Indian effort to link NAM to peace, disarmament and development, which, in the Soviet view, constitute the centre-piece of international politics.

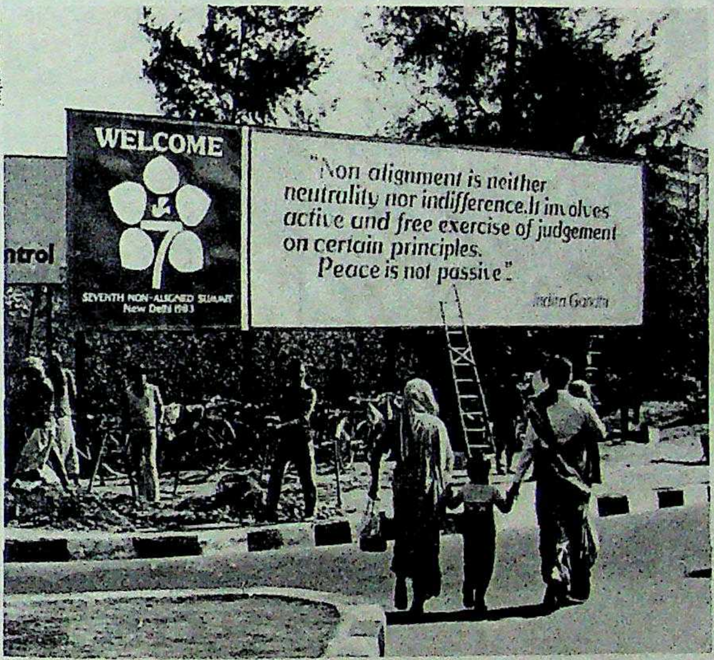
With such a galaxy of life and death issues on the table, it would be surprising if there weren't some ruffled feathers. The Indian draft has evoked some negative comment from the socialist hard core in the movement. The absence of any condemnation of the US role in El Salvador has been noticed, particularly, and there is a feeling that the draft could have been more strident in its denunciation of imperialism, particularly of the US role in the Third World. Diplomats tend to be circumspect and aren't saying very much till their heads of state have an opportunity to make their pitch. But if the sympathisers of the socialist countries, the communist parties in India, are any indication then there will be a call for stronger language. Sadhan Mukherji, a foreign policy spokesman of the Communist Party of India (CPI) says that the draft political declaration "leaves much to be desired. It is a low-key document" and "is liable to further dilution as a result of reactionary pressures which are already on".

There won't, of course, be any breakdown on this score. Unlike in other forums, the non-aligned movement has so far succeeded in keeping its diverse flock together by opting for negotiation and decision-making by consensus rather than voting procedures which split participants into irreconcilable groups. The movement's critics argue that this reduces its decision-making to an unacceptably low common denominator among the positions of the individual countries, but there is no doubt that the movement has shown more cohesiveness than anything comparable in any other grouping. "We tackle specific issues and we tackle them full face," argues the foreign office spokesman, Mani Shankar Aiyer, "and because we adopt the consensus approach, there is no breakdown. It's like giving a blind man a walking stick. He won't see but he'll be helped to walk."

Far-sighted: If the non-aligned movement is still walking when others—notably the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)—have all but collapsed, it is a tribute not only to the far-sightedness of the founders of the movement, who described its philosophical underpinnings with an eye to the future, but also to the movement's resilience. Yet the inner problems of NAM can't be wished away, nor an their gravity be challenged. As former foreign minister Mishra says: "There is a danger of non-alignment becoming technical or formal. Some countries want to keep one foot in non-alignment and one foot in alignment, and this might be a more dangerous form of alignment." Another former foreign minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, feels strongly that the corpus has become unmanageable. "The criteria for membership has become diluted and I'd like the summit to have a second look at the criteria." Quoting from the Havana declaration Vajpayee feels it is inconsistent with non-alignment for any country to permit permanent military ties bases with the great powers, both of which are expressly allowed by NAM under certain conditions. Clearly, to keep a herd of 100 nations equidistant from Soviet Union and the United States is not the role non-alignment. That role, as visualised by NAM's founding fathe was something very different: strengthen the independence of t developing nations, enable them to develop fast according to th own choice, resist pressures from the power blocs to get involved their world-wide confrontation. In the historical period of dec onisation, it was relatively easy to mobilise the NAM as a strong an imperialist platform. In the post-imperialist period, the va majority of non-aligned nations find themselves to be no more th the backyard of the world capitalist system. Only a relatively sm number, fewer than 15, has broken away from that system to join t international socialist system headed by the USSR. India is alm the only nation that has followed its own, independent road development, with linkages with both world system.

Dichotomies: It's hardly surprising, then, that countries shou find it difficult at times to distinguish between their national polic towards any particular issue and the movement's combined a proach. The two frequently don't coincide, as in the case of Kamp chea, for example, where In recognises the Heng Sam regime but goes along with t consensus decision of the mo ment to keep the Kampuche seat vacant because of the wid pread opposition in the mo ment to the Vietnamese-back Kampuchean regime. This co led with the movement's inabil to help its members solve th bilateral disputes—such as Iran-Iraq conflict—tends devalue the effectiveness of movement. But, as JNU's Misl says: "Some people think n alignment is a medicine for all i ernational ailments. It isn't Some problems fade with ti but others the movement m learn to live with."

HARI OM GULATI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7
SEVENTH NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT
New Delhi 1983
"Non alignment is neither neutrality nor indifference. It involves active and free exercise of judgement on certain principles. Peace is not passive".
Indira Gandhi
ntrol

A hoarding in New Delhi: a battle of heart and minds

The battle, as one top Ind official says, is for hearts minds, to change attitudes ca fied over centuries and decad "The task is no less than to back history," says anot adding that progress cannot be seen from year to year but will measured over decades. The movement is barely 22 years old, enough to be considered mature but scarcely mature enough to able to cope adequately with the complex and confusing probl that bedevil the world.

Important Platform: NAM as a world force is no longer wha used to be in the '60s. But it is still the most important mobilisatio platform of developing countries. In 21 years it has influenced course of global events, though it has not been able to determ them, which is still the privilege of the politically and economic modernized nations. NAM has been a great factor in bringing ab other international forums of the new nations, such as G-77 and South in the North-South syndrome. For more than a decade gave the nations of Africa a distinctive identity. It provided motive force that created OAU.

As formal leader of NAM for three years, India will not be ridi wave of history. India's chairmanship will be amply rewarded if can fight back some of the waves now rocking the planet: milita tion, drift to nuclear war and economic recession amidst great po confrontation.

—BHABANI SEN GUPTA with SUMAN DU

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BANGLADESH

Uneasy Truce

AFTER a year of renewed martial law administration, the second since Bangladesh was born as a republic in 1971, the nation is again plunging headlong into a crisis. Last fortnight, Bangladesh's Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA), Lt-General H.M. Ershad, staved off by the skin of his teeth a situation which would have surely witnessed him out of power. At the last moment, he was able to strike a bargain with the administration, uneasily led by him and including an army brass that highly disapproves of his conduct. Though Ershad continues in office, the itch for a change has already begun, and the mercurial CMLA is likely to find the going getting increasingly tough.

Dhaka, the capital city with a population of 2.5 million, wore the familiar battle-scarred look as army jeeps, fitted out with machine guns, revved down the streets for four days since the two-day-long orgy of violence and destruction had begun on February 14. Five persons were killed in Dhaka and Chittagong, the port city in the mouth of the Bay of Bengal. Mobs of angry students, shouting "Death to the military rulers", clashed with riot police and paramilitary forces at the "people's barricades" in and around the city. Rows of government vehicles were set on fire at fashionable Motijheel in downtown Dhaka.

Police firing at demonstrators in Dhaka and (left) Ershad: impetuous moves

Severe Steps: To chime with the widespread unrest, referred to as "street hooliganism" by the state-controlled Radio Bangladesh, the CMLA began a crackdown on the political parties on a scale never attempted since he came to power riding the crest of a bloodless coup in March last year. In fact, the crackdown preceded the street unrest, starting with the arrest of three student leaders from Dhaka University campus, the cradle of all political changes in Bangladesh, as early as January 30.

However, on February 15, just as the demonstration had begun to gather intensity, troops formed a ring around the Dhanmandi house of Kamal Hossain, a leader of the Awami League. There were 30 leaders of the "14-party alliance" present in Hossain's house at that time, including Sheikh Hasina Wazed, president of the Awami League (Hasina) and daughter of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; Abdus Samad Azad, a former minister; Abdul Mannan, a presidium member of the Awami League; Motia Chowdhury, a woman leader; and Tofael Ahmed, youth leader. The leaders of the 14-party alliance, who had been opposed to Ershad's new ideas of "Islamising" the republic and had been clamouring for restoration of democratic rules, were all rounded up.

Almost at the same time, about 1,000 students were arrested, including the entire 100-member leadership of the secular Chhatra Sangram Parishad. Only the right-wing Islamic Chhatra Shibir leaders were spared.

Low Profile: But these developments were overshadowed by their fall-out within the cantonment, one manifestation of which was the complete disappearance of Ershad's name from radio and television for a period of over 24 hours. Disbelieving members of the diplomatic corps in Dhaka switched on their TV sets to see the face of Major-General Abdur Rahman, Zonal Martial Law Administrator for Zone A and GOC of the Nine Infantry, issuing all orders to administration instead of Ershad appear on the screen.

Rahman is closely observed by Dhak little band of professional "cantonm watchers" as an ambitious general wit loyal following among the 75,000-str Bangladesh Army's officer corps. His pi tal position as the head of the crack Nine fantry, which controls the Dhaka garris coupled with the rumours of his protrac disagreement with Ershad about the CML reform plans, triggered rampant rumour Dhaka of a change-over.

The doubts were quelled but without planation a day later, on February 16, w Ershad bobbed up the Secretariat with notice, and told the officers: "The men lost and the resources destroyed all belon to this poor country. We cannot repl what we lost." His tone was pabably conciliatory.

Constitutional Chang Tension was building up Bangladesh ever since Ersl had announced, in the middl January, his ideas about rev ting the Constitution with c cessions to persistent dema from the religious leaders dilute its secular content. T time round, Ershad had pl ned to introduce the change using the traditional Febru 21 celebrations as the thin of the wedge.

But this time Ers wanted to change the basic c racter of the February 21 c brations. Stirring a horn nest, his office issued an o saying that instead of put *alpana* (traditional floral terns) at the martyrs' colu the day would be observed recitation from the Quran.

ERSHAD'S quick march along road to Islamisation had abru begun at a congregation at the Se tariat mosque, where the *Milad Mahfil* held on the evening of December 30. congregation was addressed, apart from Martial Law Administrators, also by lea of the country's various mosques. The and content of Ershad's speech sent sh waves. Said he: "We must give Islan rightful place in the Constitution. should there be any fear if it is made the religion? After all, Islam is a religion of rance and accommodation."

Riding roughshod over the sentim of the vast majority of his countrymen, often see in such campaigns a covert atte to return to the old Pakistani spirit, Er llowed it up with a series of similar invecves. On New Year's Day, he told a rally at arisal that, "Islam was the only life-style to llow", forgetting that his country (populaon: 9 crore) has a 1.2 crore Hindu populaon. On the day, he made all mosque propers tax-free, commenting piously that slam spread from the mosques".

Some of the analysts in Dhaka who me to New Delhi later said they were taken mpletely aback by the CMLA's stance. But e climax came at an Islamic convention ganised by the fanatic Jamiatul Mudarreen on January 14. Flanked by Moulana annan and Moulana Shah Abu Zafar, own as the pir of Sarsina, both dreaded ures of the Al-Badr (the secret organisan responsible for the liquidation of 2.5 llion people who had opposed the Yahya gime in 1971), Ershad said: "Islam will ve the pivotal position in the future nstitution of the coun.... Our struggle is to fight enemies of Islam and to turn ngladesh into an Islamic untry." His last ominous rds were: "Every Banglashi should believe in Islam."

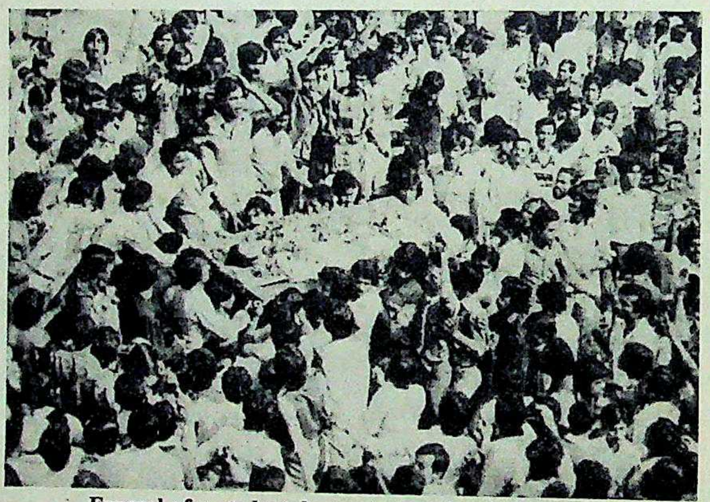
Instant Rapport: If his tone s frenzied, equally heady was reception his words got m the fanatic crowd of 000. As Ershad praised udi Arabia, saying that eryone there is happy bese everyone is a Muslim", cheerleaders began shoug: "Ershad, you move ahead, are with you". "Call me Al j," he shouted back at the wd, "because that gives me ength." Within days it ame known that Ershad had been plang to:

- replace the British judicial system by the *riat* (Islamic law) and the Quranic princis;
- declare Islam as the state religion;
- introduce Arabic from the first stand in schools, thus compelling the primary dents to go in for a three-language forla; and
- according to diplomatic reports, he had begun a plan to raise an army of 10,000 n exclusively for the use of the Governnt of Saudi Arabia.

In an obvious backlash, the Dhaka iversity Central Students' Association CSU), which had earlier spearheaded the olt against the Pakistani military regime, an its movement. Seventeen intellectuals, uding vice-chancellors, poets, linguists, ntists and assorted opinion-makers, ed a memorandum which stated: "The rney that began 31 years ago through the resistance to attacks on our language and culture and indeed, on our very identity, by the reactionary forces finally culminated in independence through the liberation war. The reactionaries and the vested interests are even today engaged in a conspiracy."

Sudden Change: However, when the crunch came, it was visible that Ershad could not carry with him the mainstay of his power, which—unfortunately for him—are the men in uniform and not just his abiding faith in Allah. On February 17, as the Dhaka streets were quiet again, selected members of the city's press corps were called to the Secretariat and unequivocally told by the Army top brass that the CMLA had "changed his mind" and that there was "no talk of" either rewriting the Constitution or introducing Arabic in the junior classes.

The climb-down for Ershad was just as unpredictable and enigmatic as his sudden burst of religious fervour. In a dramatic turn-round, he offered opposition parties a "national dialogue" on the "next course of action". But, unwittingly, he had opened a Pandora's box and it will be difficult for him to put the lid back again.



Funeral of a student demonstrator: frenzied reaction

First, by his peremptory words and action, he brought about a unity of the political parties which did not exist even a week before his Islamic convention speech. As a result, the 14-party alliance was formed, straddling across a wide range of opinions. The Jatiyo Samajbadi Dal (JSD), with its pro-Chinese overtones, now began sitting on the same platform with Hasina Wazed's Awami League and the pro-Moscow National Awami Party.

On the other hand, even the pan-Islamic parties of Bangladesh began getting polarised. Their six-party alliance includes the fiercely anti-Awami League and anti-India Democratic League of Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed as well as the Islamic Democratic League, a fundamentalist outfit led by M lana Andul Rahim. And the polarisat took place within the last three weeks, co tesy Ershad's impetuous motions.

Various Motives: According to dip matic sources in New Delhi, there are rious explanations floating in Dhaka as Ershad's motives. One of these relates to newly aquired personal conviction ab Islam. Said a Western analyst in India: "T General's recent behaviour is not enti normal. He recently told a rally that wanted a son but his wife could not conce in 26 years of their marriage. But when came to rule the country, it was as if God chosen him to lead Bangladesh along Islamic way, and reward him. His wife co ceived." On January 18, she gave birth t boy at Dhaka Cantonment's Sena Bhav where the Ershads live.

The matter of his personal faith ap Ershad has so far given ve little indication of fulfilling promises on which he came power in last March. T growth target of the countr economy for 1982–83 was cently lowered to 4.5 per cen place of earlier projection, i tially buoyed up by rhetorica hope, at 6 per cent. The Dh Middle Class Cost of Livi Index, which is credited with termining the "prevalent pol cal mood", was up 8 per cent the first five months of financial year. Even the revis projection of 4.5 per ce growth meant nothing on base of 1981–82, when the gr domestic product grew by 0.9 per cent.

The disillusionment with Ershad's m tary rule, which he often seeks to justify describing it as "people's martial law", just started. Already, Abdus Sattar, former president, has issued a statem saying that Ershad should quit, hand power back to him. Even Ershad's ploy frame the erstwhile ministers in corrup cases has been backfiring. A summary m tary tribunal recently exonerated Mou Ahmed, a former minister, of one of the corruption charges levelled at him.

In his new conciliatory phase, Ersha even prepared to restore democracy by c ling for elections at three stages: the th and municipal levels, the provincial distr and finally at the national Assembly 1985". But many think that Ershad, like tinpot dictators, would allow for elect only when it suits him best. Still, the do remains that he cannot abate the new fo that he has himself stirred up if he sudde draws up the bridge.

—SUMIT MI

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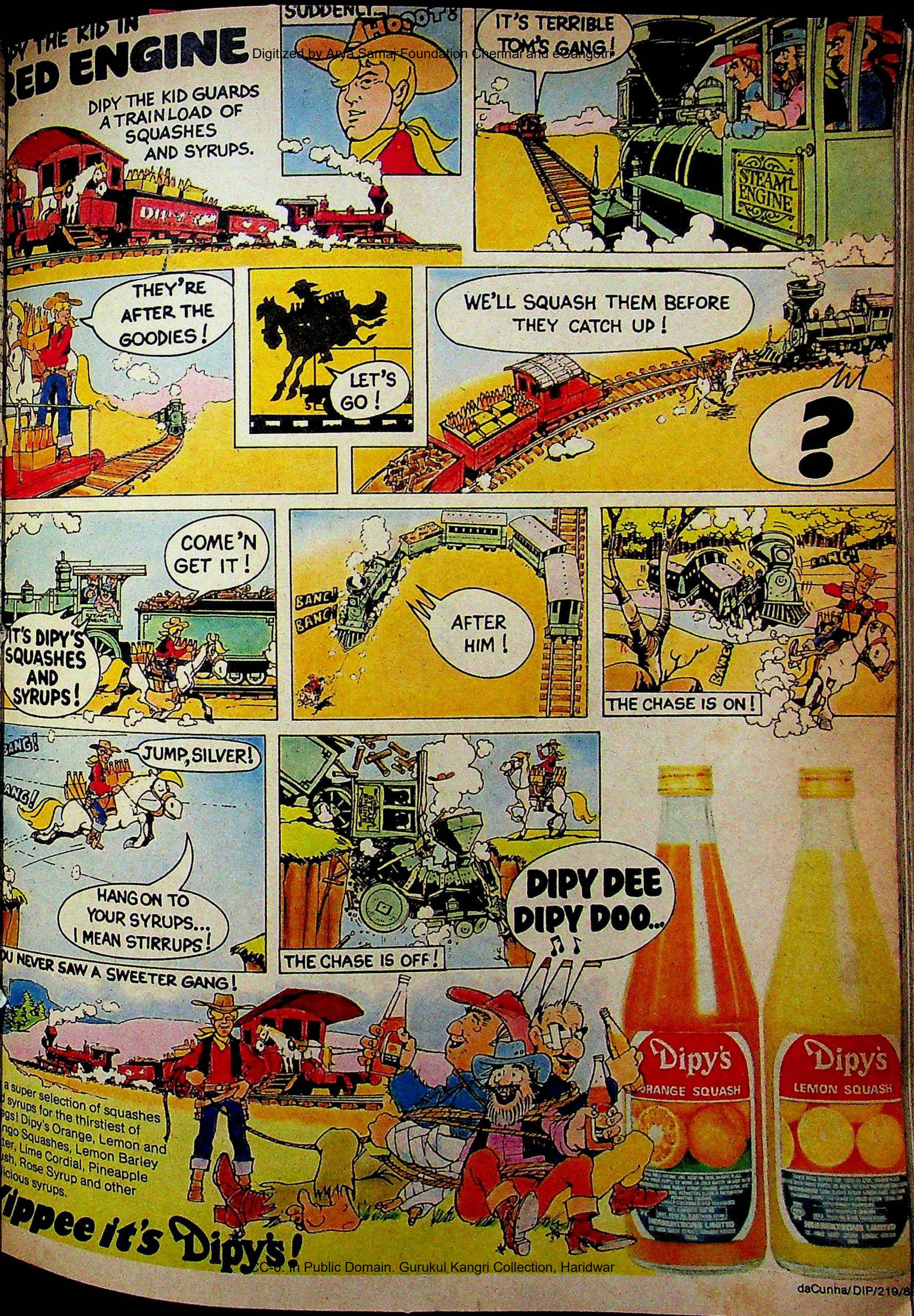
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ED ENGINE
DIPY THE KID GUARDS A TRAIN LOAD OF SQUASHES AND SYRUPS.
DIPY
SUDDENLY...
WHOOOA!
IT'S TERRIBLE TOM'S GANG!
STEAM ENGINE
THEY'RE AFTER THE GOODIES!
LET'S GO!
WE'LL SQUASH THEM BEFORE THEY CATCH UP!
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COME 'N GET IT!
IT'S DIPY'S SQUASHES AND SYRUPS!
BANG! BANG!
AFTER HIM!
BANG!
THE CHASE IS ON!
BANG!
BANG!
JUMP, SILVER!
HANG ON TO YOUR SYRUPS... I MEAN STIRRUPS!
OU NEVER SAW A SWEETER GANG!
THE CHASE IS OFF!
DIPY DEE DIPY DOO...
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ANEEROOD Jugnauth, prime minister of Mauritius, is a worried man. It is taking all skill to hold his rumbustious coalition toher. And worse still there appears little ubt that his position is being undermined Paul Berenger, the powerful finance nister. Jugnauth himself admits openly: ul Berenger's attitude has given me food thought."

In the seven months since it came to ver Jugnauth's Government has lurched m one crisis to another. In October 1982 a ority of his partymen got together to nand Jugnauth's resignation. Instead of iging, Jugnauth turned the tables on them threatening to dissolve parliament. The eat had its effect and for a short time the ty deputies lay low.

erenger (left) and Jugnauth: collision

Whispering Campaign: But in recent ks the dissidents in the Mauritian vernment have gone back to their old ne. A whispering campaign aimed at nauth has started once again. There is talk of starting a "popular militia" as police are not capable of maintaining law order. Since Jugnauth is in charge of the rnal Affairs portfolio, there can be no bt about whom the criticism of the police imed against.

Berenger's efforts to assert his influence n behind the scenes have come as no sur to those who have followed his career. has always been the undisputed boss of Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). ever since taking over the finance port he has used every opportunity to consote his position. A measure of his power is fact that Jugnauth himself once admitted local paper *Le Mauricien* that he usually sulted Berenger before implementing any or measure.

The present situation has caused consi ble worry to the Hindu community of the island. It now appears to them that Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam the former prime minister was right when he warned that the Hindus would find that their power was being eroded if the MMM came to power. He also warned that even if a Hindu was appointed prime minister he would be under Berenger's influence and that Berenger would try to usher in a communist regime since "he rotates around the orbit of communist leaders". Ramgoolam said that in such an event, the Hindus, who constitute the majority of the island's population—nearly 54 per cent—would lose their political power.

At the time, Jugnauth, who was then the leader of the Opposition dismissed Ramgoolam's warnings. Berenger also accused Ramgoolam of trying to rake up communal feeling to stay in power, appealing to the Hindus over the Roman Catholics who are 30 per cent and Muslims, about 16 per cent of the country's population.

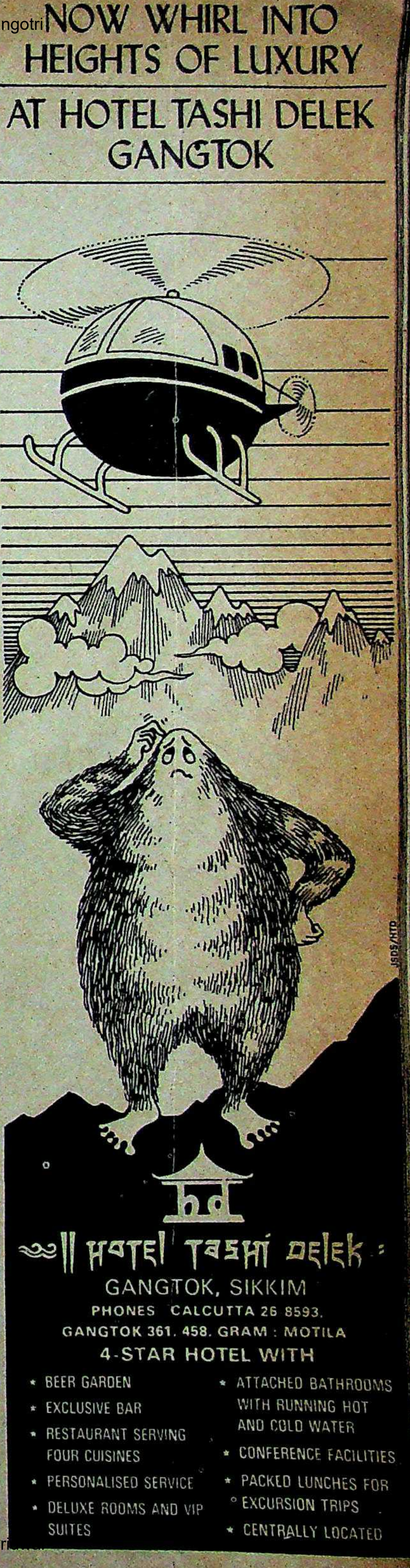
Pruning Process: Jugnauth's difficulties reflect Ramgoolam's warnings. But apart from this the Government has also started taking steps to trim the civil service on the grounds that the bureaucrats are all connected with the old regime. These steps may be aimed at removing some of the people of Indian origin from the bureaucracy. And even where Hindus have been appointed to new jobs, care has been taken to see that they are supporters of the ruling party.

Jugnauth is doing his best to prop up his position. He steadfastly insists that he will not be bossed over by Berenger. He once observed, "What Berenger does not realise is that I don't like being led by the nose." More surprisingly he recently spoke about the prevalent attitudes towards people of Indian origin, saying, "In this country, some racists still believe that the people of Indian origin have their place in the sugarcane fields, fit to be labourers and cane-cutters only. They cannot (adjust to the) fact that descendants of coolies can hold important posts."

What makes Berenger more powerful at the movement is his friendship with the leaders of neighbouring countries like Seychelles and Malagasy. The recently set up Indian Ocean Commission comprising Seychelles, Malagasy and Mauritius is said to be his brain-child. Berenger is said to be on good terms with Seychelles President Albert Rene and Malagasy President Dedier Ratsiraka. Some even feel that with their help he may attempt to seize power by force.

Jugnauth, however, maintains that come what may, he will be his own man. He says: "Even if I serve as prime minister for a few days, I want to go down on record as a prime minister who did not allow anyone to dictate to him or to deflect him from his course of action."

—TEKLALL GUNESH in Port Louis



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The Indian Connection

THE GOVERNMENT has concluded that the troubled Tamil North where clan- tine armed bands constitute Sri Lanka's mber one "security threat" has been "an lligence failure". As a result, the island's elligence services will be revamped short- A new national intelligence board (NIB) ortedly modelled on Britain's MI5 will rk directly under President Jayawardene. will consist of hand-picked operatives m both the police and the armed services.

At present, the Intelligence Services ision (ISD) the special branch, is exclusively police outfit. High el political sources revealed re- tly that the ISD has been plagued "factional fighting" resulting in urity leaks. The ISD reports to Defence Ministry and from re reports go to the National urity Council (NSC) and the sident.

Dominant View: Though there o settled opinion on the matter, dominant official view seems to that army operatives fared ch better in the north in intelli- ce gathering than the police. wever ISD Director Tilak Fonse- maintains that the police have wed the ISD to "go it alone" wi- ut providing it with the neces- y back-up support of informa- n collected by uniformed police ield level.

The Government has grounds alarm. Not a week passes without a or front-page story in the national press dramatic events in the Jaffna peninsula. the least disturbing level, the despatches ort undergraduates on strike, fasts and agraha by students and teachers, shops sed in protest, prayers in church for sts taken into custody, demonstrations street marches and the occasional attack state-owned bus, or a mysterious explo- All this reflects the mood in Jaffna, the en hostility of a community which fre- ntly breaks into open defiance against army and police presence and the Pre- tion of Terrorism Act (PTA).

However, it is the cold-blooded assassi- on of political personalities and sus- ed information techniques, the attacks well-guarded police stations, bank rob- ies and daring daylight hold-ups which e the security services deeply worried.

Not only is each operation getting bolder but almost all show a high degree of sophistication in planning and execution. The latest incident is a fair illustration. On February 19, inspector K.R. Wijewardena, officer in-charge of the Point Pedro police station, and his police driver were gunned down at about eight at night when coming out of an ill-lit cafe. Both men, off duty were in civvies.

This suggests that the killers had stalked them. It also means that they knew he was a Sinhalese. In the past, 90 per cent of casualties have been Tamils and it did look as if the "underground" was scrupulously avoiding attacks on Sinhalese for fear of sparking off a racial conflagration. The weapon used was nine mm sub-machine gun. Weapons captured in attacks on police stations must now make quite an arsenal, not to mention weapons that may be smuggled from India.

Police arresting Prabhakaran (left) and his accomplice in Madras after the shootout; extradition problems

Indian Connection: Just before he returned to army headquarters in Colombo to become chief of staff, Brigadier Cyril Ranatunge, area commander (north) told the press that it was now known that members of the proscribed Tamil "Liberation Tigers" organisation had received weapons training in Assam, and in Lebanon. One of their main sanctuaries was Salem, in Tamil Nadu. The arrest of six Tamil youths, including Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran, the leaders of two rival factions of the militant "underground" after a shoot-out in Pondy Bazaar, Madras, has confirmed the fact of a strong "Tamil Nadu connection."

The politics of the "Indian connection" also disturbs the authorities greatly. Through the good offices of S. Thondaman, the Indian Tamil plantation union boss and the first union representative in a Colombo cabinet, the Government believe it had gained the sympathy of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran. However, it is now clear that the two DMK's are competing with each other to play political patron to the Opposition Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in Sri Lanka and to the movement demanding an independent state of "Eelam". Taking a long-established smugglers route, "hit squads" skip to south India immediately after each 'operation'. So Indian cooperation is vital.

Colombo is convinced that its attempt to have the two 'Tiger' leaders extradited—the six men are being tried in Madras—was thwarted on account of Tamil Nadu pressure on Delhi. At the recent Commonwealth Law Ministers Conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka tried hard to persuade Britain, India and Canada to tighten extradition laws. Just before the conference opened on February 15 TULF leader A. Amirthalingam left for Madras in what was regarded here as a 'blocking move' on the extradition plea. Colombo and Delhi, Jaffna and Madras are thus involved in a complicated four-cornered game of pressure and counter-pressure.

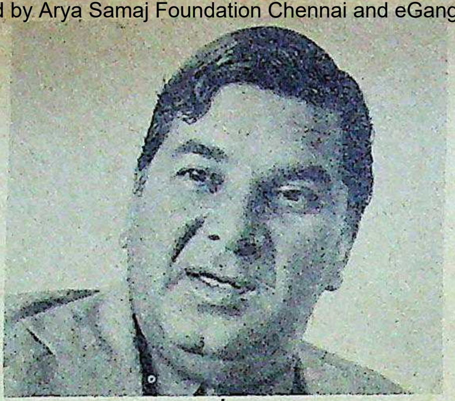
The Tamil Nadu interest in the Sri Lanka Tigers is, in fact, a source of no small embarrassment to the Indian Government, but Indian extradition laws leave the Indian Government with little freedom of action. In the absence of a bilateral extradition treaty between Sri Lanka and India, Indian officials explain that it would be for the Sri Lanka Government to initiate legal proceedings in an Indian court. Such processes are notoriously long and even if the move were successful, running the entire legal gauntlet all the way to the Supreme Court, India would still have to leave it to the deportees to choose their destination.

PATROLLING the narrow stretch of water which separates the two countries is exceedingly difficult, and it is clear that Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka bent on evading arrest don't find it too difficult to melt into the countryside of Tamil Nadu. And though, New Delhi may not have much influence on Tamil sentiment, the official policy is to actively discourage illegal crossings. Says Indian High Commissioner Chhatwal, "Not an inch of Indian territory will be allowed to be used against a friendly neighbour like Sri Lanka."

After Solomon Bandaranaike made Sinhala the island's only official language in 1956 there was an exodus of educated Tamils. A new generation of expatriate Tamils have formed highly vocal 'lobbies' in the US, Britain, Canada, Western Europe, Australia and Scandinavia, the very places on whom the Government depends heavily for aid. The Sri Lanka foreign office and its embassies are now fighting a rearguard action against what Professor Wiswa Warnapala calls "an effective campaign to internationalise the Tamil question".

Perhaps the most dramatic development was the arrest of three Christian priests—two Catholic, one Methodist—a Tamil medical practitioner, a Jaffna don and his wife. Several other priests, including the bishop of Jaffna, were questioned but the army commander emphasised that the Catholic church was in no way involved.

The six are now being charged under the PTA for harbouring terrorists, withholding information and related crimes. One of the priests is alleged to have had a large sum of money traceable to the loot from a sensational bank robbery, a 'Tigers' operation. Terrorists wounded in a frontal attack on a police station are said to have been harboured and given medical attention. This might suggest that the Tamil "underground" can now claim sympathy from a wide swathe of Tamil society. Recently, it tracked down and 'eliminated' two criminals on the police "most wanted" list. Apparently, they had been extorting money in the name of "Eelam". The 'Tigers' are said to have distributed leaflets the previous week warning "anti- social elements".



Chhatwal: maintaining good relations

Increasing Bitterness: The Christians constitute only 7 per cent of the population and the majority are Sinhalese. Yet the Government did not want a confrontation with another minority and the powerful
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time when election fever was runnin
The aftermath of the highly contr
and fiercely fought referendum last
ber has seen an increasing bitterness
supporters of Mrs Bandarnaike's Sr
Freedom Party and opposition suspo
general. So a 'Sinhala consensus' to
hostile Tamil north can be ruled out.
austerity budget on the cards in mid
and the economic landscape bleak, a
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United National Party which has just
leader win a second six- year term and
ment's life extended till the end of the

President Jayawardene's talks w
Gandhi in Delhi this month will sure
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Ocean is only too obvious, equally
ficant are its racially mixed populati
its location on the border of the Jaff
insula. —MERVYN DE SILVA in

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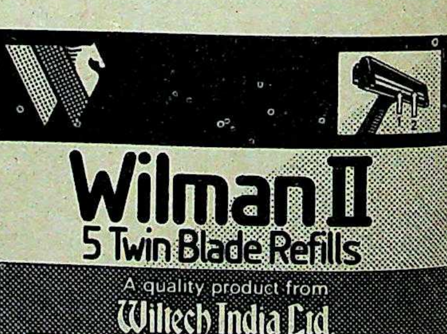

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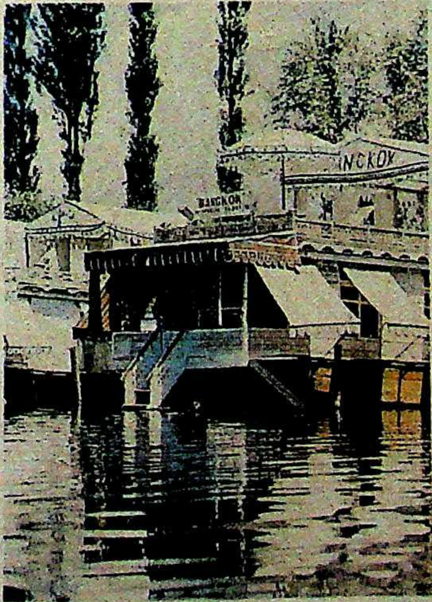

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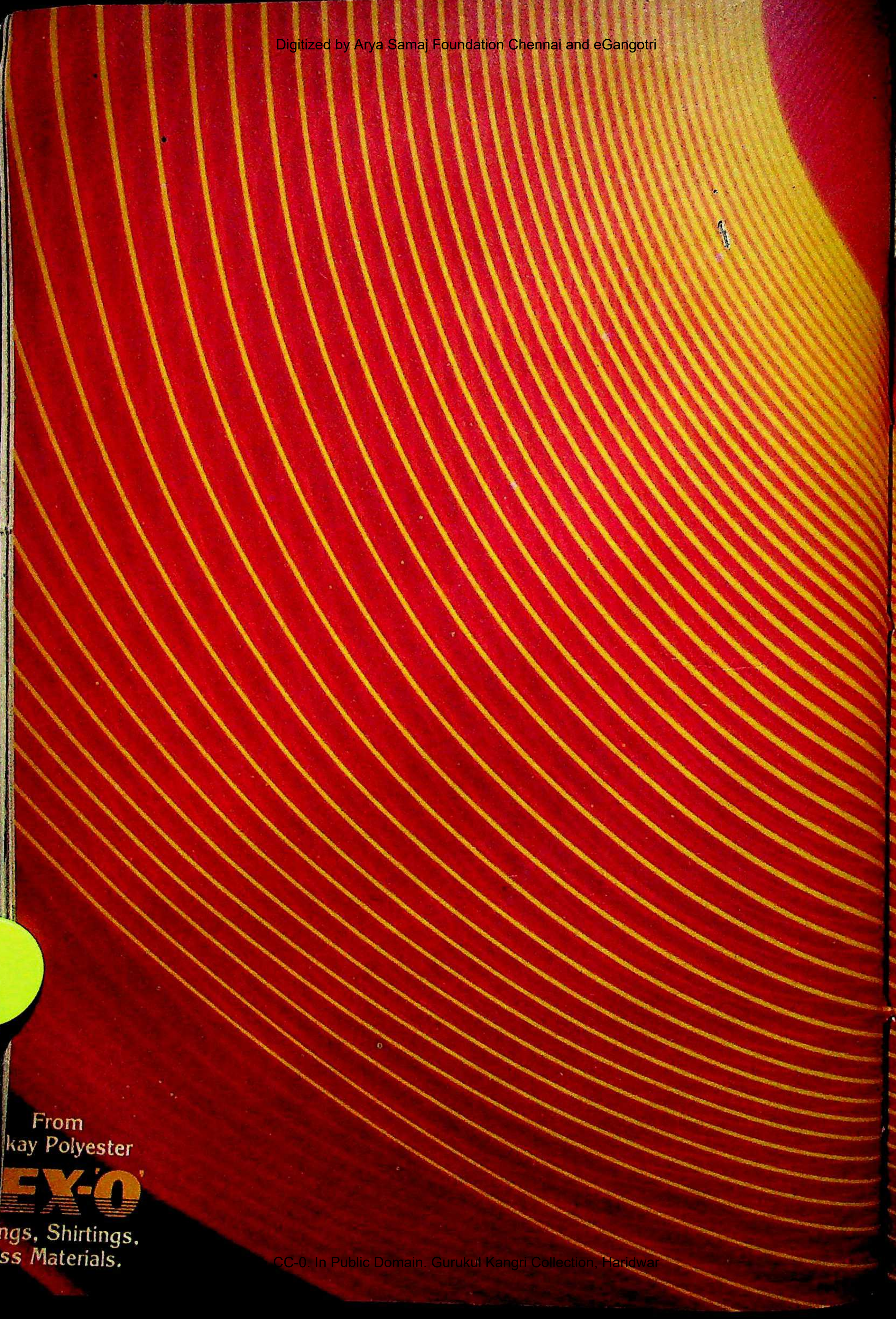
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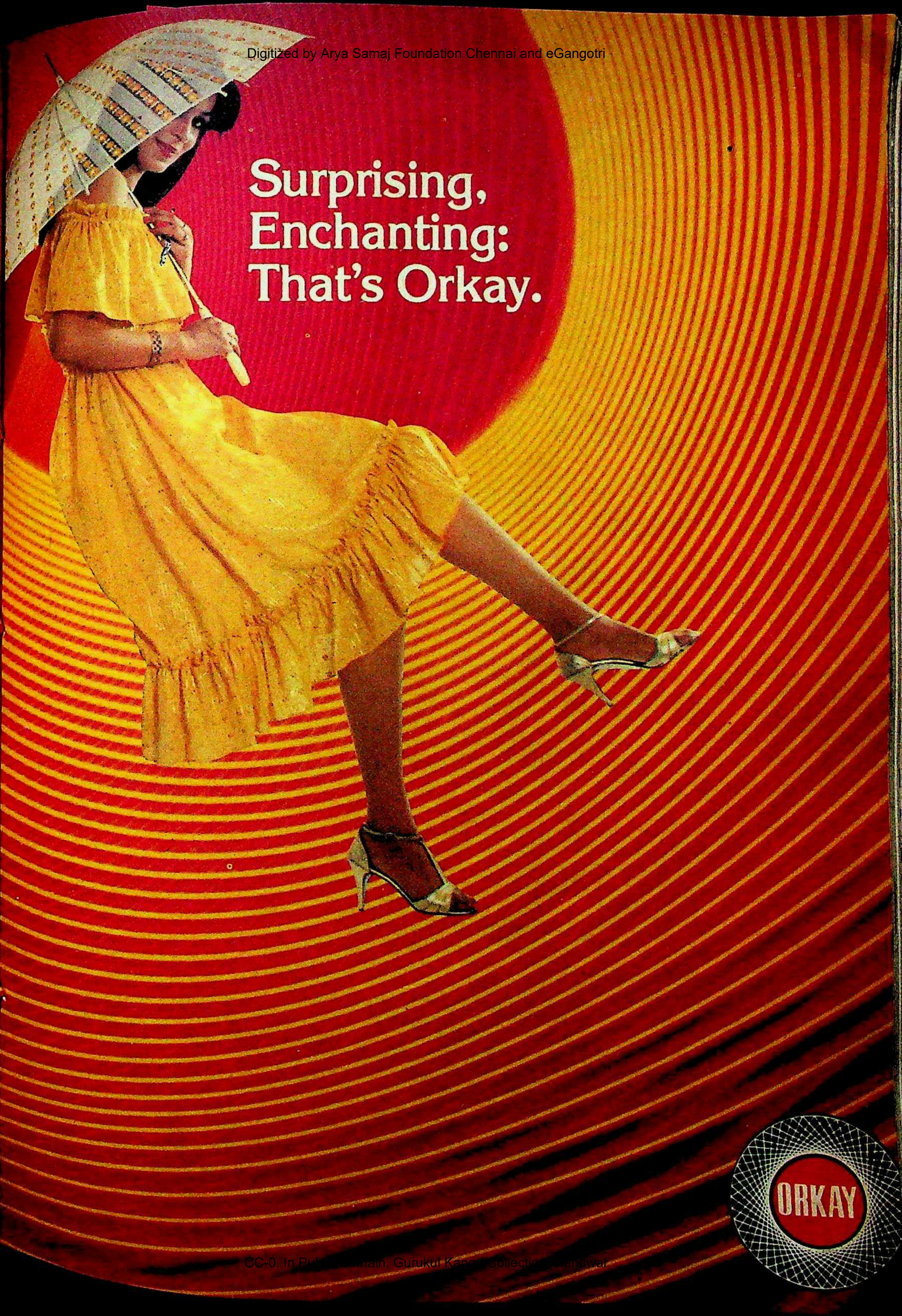
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RITAIN

Paying The Price

BRITAIN is no more the Mecca that it was for bright overseas students in the '60s and the '70s. For the last three ears British universities have been operaing a two-tier system: overseas students are aying around eight times more fees than ritain's 'home' students. In the event many verseas countries have reacted adversely to he British Government's move, which has nvited a great deal of ill-feeling. Malaysia, or instance, has cancelled many British conracts and is making its feelings clear to he visiting British MP's.

A study published in 1982 by the Overeas Students Trust pressed the British overnment to "recognise and assert the mportance of encouraging overseas stuents to come to Britain". In response to the ressure, the British Government, last fortight, pledged £46 million (Rs 73.6 crore) owards awards and scholarships to help verseas students carry out higher studies n Britain. For India and other Commonealth countries this means additional wards under the Commonwealth Schorship and Fellowship Plan and expanon of the Technical Cooperation Traing Programme. India, Kenya and igeria are among the largest recipients f awards under this programme.

The discriminatory policy of the ritish Education Authorities (BEA) has aused hundreds of overseas students to orego plans of higher education in ritain. The difference between home udents, who pay as little as £480 (Rs 680) for an arts or science course as ompared to a minimum payment of 3,000 (Rs 48,000) for overseas students ising to £7,000 (Rs 1.12 lakh) for a ould-be doctor), has therefore meant a big duction in the number of overseas students ho come to Britain. Universities in Britain ve thus suffered a major loss of income om full-fee paying students. Coming at a me when the Government has also cut back n funds for higher education as part of their onomic policy, this has caused great rentment in colleges which were supposed to ve been helped by the higher fees from reign students.

Fewer Students: Britain's Council for verseas Student Affairs reckons that there s been something like a 30 per cent drop in erseas students coming to Britain since gher fees were introduced. In 1975–76 ere were for instance 776 students from dia, 799 from Sri Lanka and 532 from kistan who came to Britain for postaduate studies. In the period 1980–81 this number dropped to 351 for India and 272 and 262 for Sri Lanka and Pakistan respectively. Around 300-500 students also come from India through the British Council and Colombo Plan for short courses.

While many more students would like to come to Britain the imposition of high fees coupled with the decision made in 1982 to make overseas students liable for certain health charges has diverted the flow of those seeking a western degree or Ph.D. to oth[illegible] countries. The US, France, West Germa[illegible] and the Soviet Union are the main be[illegible]ficiaries with India also gaining many ove[illegible]seas students, specially from the Commonwealth, who might otherwise have sough[illegible] admission to universities in Britain.

A crucial aspect of this controversy over high fees is how the BEA define an 'overseas' student. A recent test-case ruling by the House of Lords has challenged the Department of Education's definition of 'overseas' and 'home' students in the matter of fees. In 1979 Nilish Shah applied for a grant from his London local council to join a university course. Shah, who came to Britain from Kenya for settlement was refused a grant on the grounds that he was technically an 'overseas' student. The Department of Education demands that to be eligible for a council grant the recipient should have been, among other things, an 'ordinary resident' of the UK for three years prior to application.

Hostel for overseas students at Sheffield University: expensive education

Shah and four other students who were similarly refused grants took their councils to court over the matter. In December of last year the House of Lords considered their cases and declared that 'ordinary resident' should be taken to mean "a man's abode in a particular place or country which the applicant has habitually and normally resided in including for purposes of "education, business or profession, employment, health family or merely love of the place". The inclusion of students' visas as falling in th category of 'ordinary resident' has created [illegible]g stir here. It means some 2,000 student who had been refused council grants as bein on restricted student visas and therefor qualifying as 'overseas' students may no get a grant backdated to the applicatio date. The possibility of having to retur 'overseas' student fees to them presents th Government with an expensive problem.

Benefits: Apart from award holders th [illegible]k of Indian students who would be affec [illegible]by the House of Lords judgement woul [illegible]the children of recently arrived immigrants, Indian business people with shor term contracts and a new group, children o expatriate Indian workers in the Middle Eas who have been flocking to Britain for 'O' an 'A' level courses and first degrees.

The Government's change of heart i the matter of helping genuine oversea students has been welcomed by mo academic institutions in Britain. Whi the exact terms of the aid programme not yet clear, most universities see it as step in the right direction. The Imperi College of Science and Technology use to have a high proportion of overseas students. Says Peter Mee, registrar of th college: "Till the fee for overseas students was raised we had something like per cent of our students from abroad. W have a large research unit and overse students were responsible for the bulk our research work. A special feature the Imperial College has been to attra students from the Commonwealth There are only 61 students from India enrolled at the college for 1982–83.

There are many people like Peter Me who would like the question of university fees sorted out to suit universities an most students alike. The Government is reluctant to increase 'home' student fees as th would not be a popular move with the voti public. The question of 'home' versus 'overseas' students has long been a sensitive on Although there are no quotas, young Britis people naturally feel they should be give preference over 'wealthy' foreign student An Oxford college was recently the centre public attention for promising places to tw Hong Kong students whose father had contributed towards the building fund.

Many 'overseas' students, includi Indians, reclassified as 'home' studen under the House of Lords ruling may bene financially now. But the already limit places available to 'home' students will me that the competition will be tougher for the young people.

—BONNY MUKHERJ

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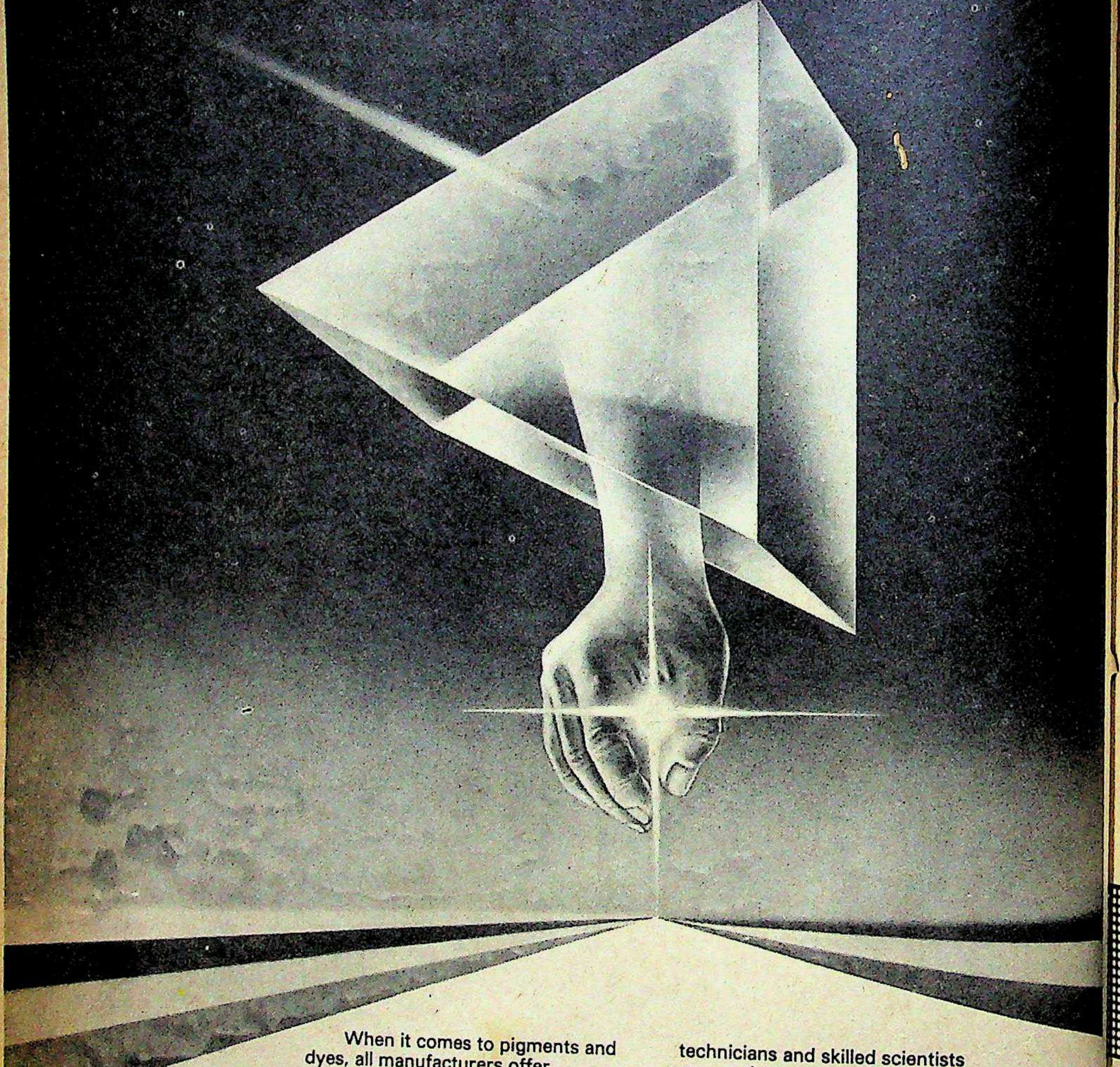

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PATRIOT

The Plot Thickens

IT WAS the kind of international scoop that every journalist fantasises about: a top secret document detailing the covert plans of a superpower to balkanise a leading Third World country. And yet, last fortnight, when a New Delhi daily front-paged what it alleged was a secret US plan to "balkanise" India, there was not even the proverbial whimper. There were, of course, justifiable reasons for the lukewarm reaction. For one, the paper in question was *Patriot*, a left wing daily published from the capital and the article was written by the paper's Editor, R.K. Mishra. For another, there were certain inaccuracies that emerged on closer examination which further eroded the story's credibility.

But even if it was, as the US Government tersely claimed, part of a "disinformation campaign invented out of whole cloth", it was cleverly done. Under any other circumstances, and projected from any other platform, the story contained the potential to do serious damage to Indo-US relations.

'Strategic Plan': The first stage of the strategy was in the form of the front-page article by Mishra headlined "US Plan For India's Balkanisation". Mishra's piece started with the blurb: "The Government of India has received the stunning proof of a US strategic plan to balkanise India and to destroy its influence in the Third World and elsewhere." He then went on to detail the contents of the document which he claimed was authored by the US ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick. The first article did not clearly say what exactly the document was except to term it a "blueprint of US global strategic objectives and operational plans for the Third World".

Under ordinary circumstances, the original article should have been enough to trigger a major diplomatic crisis, but owing to its origins, it failed to have the desired impact. The US Embassy did nothing except to issue, two days later, an official denial by Kirkpatrick. Even the Indian Government was unmoved and neither did the media pick up the story.

The next stage was the appearance in *Link*, a weekly from the *Patriot* stable, of the reproduction of the entire alleged document along with a photocopy of what it claimed was the first page of a cable containing the blueprint sent to all "important posts" in March 1982. The *Link* article also mentioned that the document was presented before a group called the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington on February 27, 1982, by Kirkpatrick. The *Link* report was quickly followed by a similar report in a leftist Madras paper called *News Today* which was almost identical including the "cable" allegedly sent by the State Department.

Checks: By now, the Foreign Ministry was obliged to bestir itself on the issue, albeit reluctantly. According to a foreign office source, the Indian Government was not in possession of the document as Mishra had claimed. In fact, this was the first they had heard of it. To make doubly sure, the ministry even asked the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) if they knew anything about the document. The answer was in the negative.

But this was hardly surprising. According to INDIA TODAY's enquiries in Washington, there is a National Conservative Political Action Conference which is better known by its acronym, NICPAC. In February 1982, NICPAC was addressed not by Kirkpatrick but by President Ronald Reagan. Kirkpatrick addressed NICPAC in 1981.

Further, NICPAC is a 500-odd member grouping which is essentially utilised for fund-raising for Republican candidates. There is nothing secret about NICPAC's meetings and it has a number of journalists among its members. NICPAC's conference and whatever speeches are made are a matter of public record and, in fact, the *Washington Post* did cover it—in a two column-inch report buried in the back pages which shows what they thought of it.

If the keynote speech was as provocative as *Patriot* made it out to be, the *Washington Post* would have been the first to blow up the story. Similarly, the Indian Government would have lost no time in pouncing on the issue had there actually been an issue to pounce upon. As the Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "Even the media has not given it much credibility. We have asked the American State Department for a copy of the speech but, according to our information, Kirkpatrick was not scheduled to speak at any meeting on that particular date."

Disinformation: When contacted, Mishra insisted that the document was "genuine" but declined to show the document except to say that it had been reproduced in *Link*. The US Embassy has also not made any formal complaint. As a sp man said: "You cannot prove a nega However, they are convinced that appearance of the story in *Patriot* is cl an example of Soviet KGB disinform which they say has picked up consider since Mrs Gandhi's successful vis Washington last August. They also state the cable reproduced in *Link* is a forge very good one except for minor but sig cant flaws and omissions.

Kirkpatrick: denial

The cable form that was reproduce *Link* is State Department Form 151 w has room for exactly 45 lines of text *Link*'s version contains 61. Further, there 24 separate words that the Americans differently from the British spelling tha been used in the text of the "document". "organisation" instead of organiza "emphasising", "recognise" and "man vres".

Significantly, the produced in *Link* says thing about an Amer plan to balkanise Indi reads: "There is a notice growth of separatist m ments to the extent there is a real possibi the balkanisation of I which would destroy i fluence in the Third W and elsewhere...." document concludes the phrase: "The U States could watch the sion of the Nehru-Ga tradition, almost irre tive of the form it takes some complacency."

Skilful Hoax: H ever, on the face of it, the contents o document reveal that it is skilfully wr and its comments on US global str could easily have been mistaken for a g ine strategic document. Except, of co for the fact that the speech was never

But if the so-called speech was, in carefully crafted in Moscow's Dzerz Street, it is equally illogical for them to planted it in *Patriot*, a paper whose le are public knowledge. The American e nation is that nobody else in the In media would touch it with the prov barge-pole. Last fortnight, the issue elevated to the highest levels when Pres Reagan, in reply to a letter from Mrs G inquiring about the story's credibility, culed the allegations. The Indian Emb Washington has also reportedly con that the document is a fabrication would indicate that rather than a ba sation of India, the issue is more aki balkanisation of the media.

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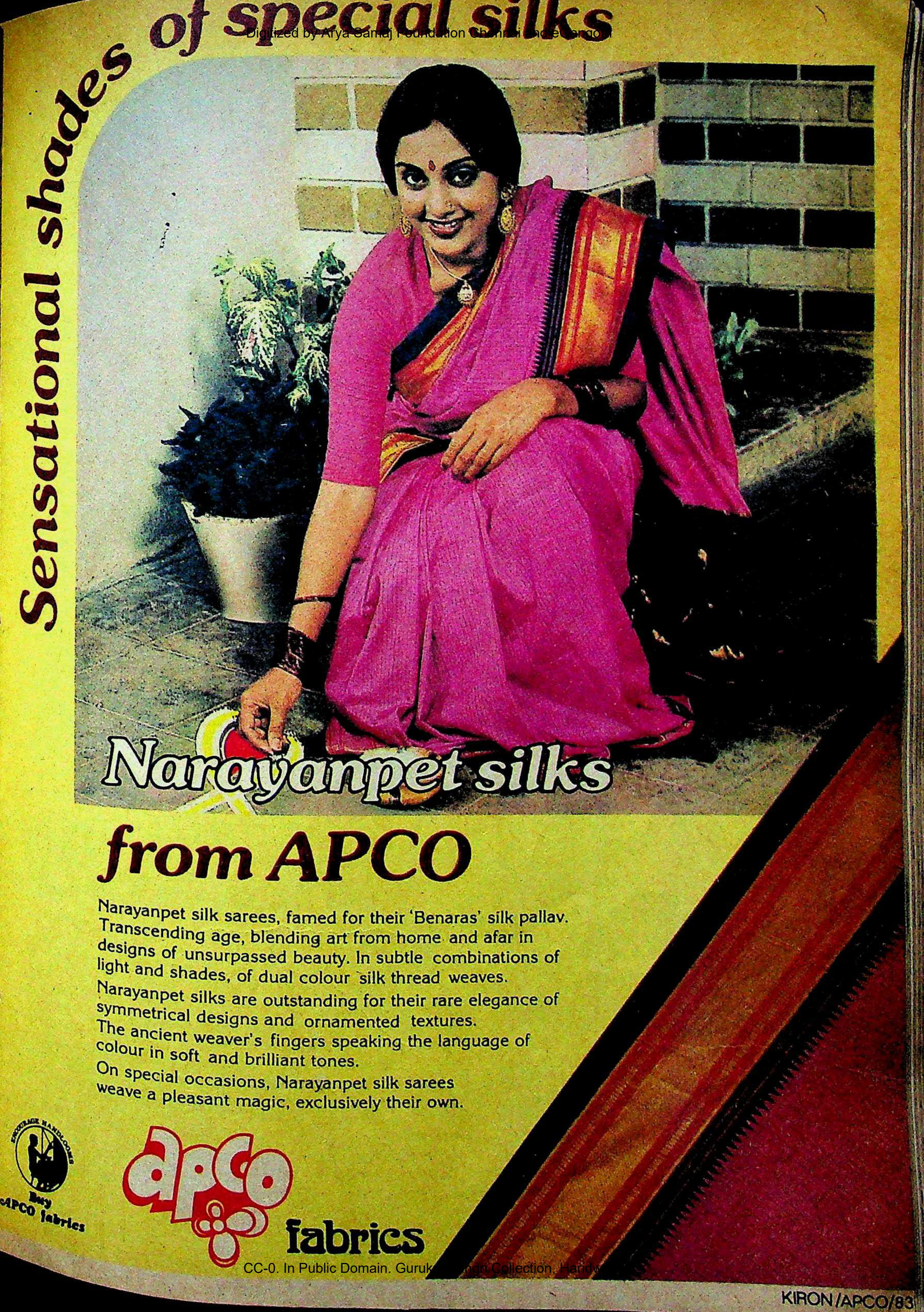

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THE ELECTRONICS DRIVE

THE HYDERABAD-based Vazir Sultan Tobacco Company is making a major bid to enter the field of electronics. The company, which like other cigarette manufactures is flush with funds, has made a bid for control of Solid State Devices, a sick joint sector unit • in Andhra Pradesh. But a rival bid has been made by the public sector Bharat Electronics Ltd. Meanwhile, Vazir Sultan has teamed up with the newly-formed Andhra Pradesh Electronics Corporation in planning a unit to produce colour television picture tubes. Vazir Sultan is expected to hold 60 per cent of the shares in the joint sector project, and control the management. A letter of intent from the Industry Ministry is expected shortly, and the plant, with an annual capacity of 5 lakh colour tubes, is to be located in Medak. The project is likely to be set up in technical collaboration with Hitachi of Japan, which already has a tie-up with the public sector Semi-Conductor Complex Ltd for electronic watch modules. Hitachi had earlier considered an export-oriented colour TV tube plant in collaboration with the Tatas, but the project was dropped as unviable.

A'S THRUST

HE TATAS may soon embark on a major new area of activity: merchant banking. The proposal is still in a preliminary stage, and the details remain to be worked out. But this is part projected thrust by the country's premier industrial house into ervice sector, reportedly being masterminded by group heir ent Ratan Tata. Other service-oriented activities being con- d include such unconventional activities as township develop- —in which, however, the group has a great deal of experience se of its role in developing Jamshedpur. The group already has e range of consultancy activities, including one of the largest ltancy companies in the country. These activities could be fur- xpanded following the thrust into service activity. However, the 's construction outfit, started over a year ago, is not doing as s expected.

KINGS BONANZA

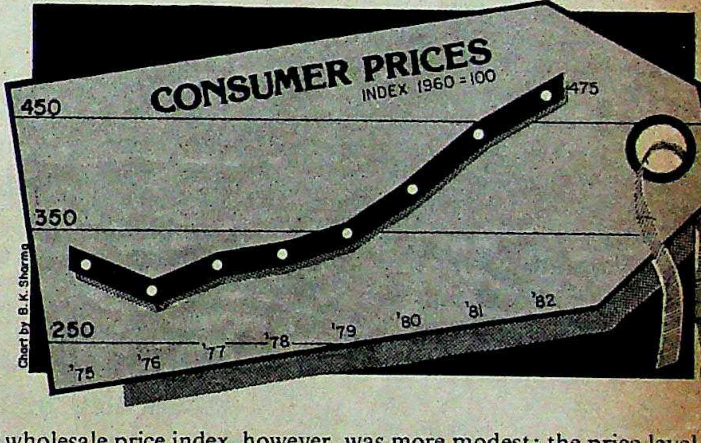
HIA Machines, the Kanpur-based company that intends manufacturing scooters in collaboration with Piaggio of Italy, is setting new records in the two-wheeler industry. No fewer .8 million people have paid Rs 500 each to book Lohia's Vespa ers, raking in an unprecedented Rs 90 crore for the company. eats by a wide margin the 1.1 million bookings that were made ear for Bajaj's new M50 motorcycle. Lohia is citing the huge nd as reason for expanding its capacity from the licensed 1 lakh kh scooters annually. If the Government agrees, Lohia will be o match Bajaj's capacity of 4.6 lakh.

G PRICE DALLYING

ONTRARY to the impression given earlier, no immediate change is expected in the Government's drug pricing policy. The proposal to introduce dual pricing, releasing a large r of drugs from the rigours of price control, has not made progress—partly because of the fear of the heated controversy night follow from a sudden and sharp increase in the prices of only used drugs. Instead, an interim measure is now being con- d to raise the mark-up percentages laid down for the different ories of drugs under the 1979 drug price control order. The ups, starting from a minimum of 40 per cent, are considered quate because of an increase in post-manufacturing costs on ems as interest and freight. This will leave the basic structure of icing policy unchanged. But even this measure has to clear a er of bureaucratic road-blocks and finally get the Cabinet's val. A decision is not expected for at least a couple of months.

INFLATED CLAIMS

THE GENERAL perception of 1982 as a year of price stability is not fully warranted: consumer prices, according to the Government's own index, rose by about 8 per cent during the year. The actual price rise could well have been more, given the index's known ability to understate the price increase. The rise in the wholesale price index, however, was more modest; the price level at the end of January was 3.7 per cent higher than a year earlier. For the man in the street, however, it is consumer prices that pick holes in the pocket; and an 8 per cent increase in 1982, over a 13 per cent rise in 1981 and an 11 per cent increase in 1980, cannot be much cause for comfort. A genuine halt to inflation is still not in sight.



THE PAPER CHASE

THE COUNTRY'S biggest newspaper publishing house is diversifying into shipping. Bennett Coleman and Co. publishers of *The Times of India* and a series of other newspapers and magazines, has acquired controlling interest in the Calcutta-based Panchsheel Shipping, which operates three ships to the West Asia-Arabian Gulf area. Four years ago, the company had sought to merge with Rohtas Industries and New Central Jute Mills, but the move was dropped—partly because of premature publicity.

Ashok Kumar Jain is the chairman of both Rohtas and New Central Jute, as well as of Bennett Coleman. Even in the case of Panchsheel Shipping, some directors of Bennett Coleman are believed to have had a financial stake in the company before the takeover, effected a few months ago. This is the first case in the country of a major newspaper publishing house moving into unrelated areas of activity. The motivation is believed to be the tax advantages involved in merging a profitable company with a losing concern.

CHAKRAVARTY PANEL

The Politics Of Economics

(From left)

IF IN TROUBLE, turn left. It doesn't really solve any problem but the change in direction helps, if only to gain time and keep your critics guessing. It is a question of tactics rather than strategy, but in politics tactics is half the game, especially the first crucial half, when you are on the defensive and your adversary has everything going for him.

By all accounts, the economy has not done too badly. Mrs Gandhi herself said so last week in her letter to state chief ministers. "Our performance has been good, our policies are right, and our objectives are clear," she is reported to have written, adding that there was no need for a total overhauling of the Government. Why then this new high power economic panel of five economists?

The panel may be new but the members are not. All of them have been associated with the Government, especially the Planning Commission, sometime or the other, and three out of five continue to hold positions in the Government. The panel Chairman, Sukhumoy Chakravarty, was a member of the Planning Commission in the 1970s and still has a room in Yojana Bhavan from where he is directing a study on monetary policy. K.N. Raj was in the commission during the days of C.D. Deshmukh and has headed several study groups for the Government. Manmohan Singh was a member of the Planning Commission before he took over as governor of Reserve Bank last year. Before that, of course, he was in the Ministry of Finance. C.H. Hanumantha Rao was chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission before he too joined the Planning Commission as a member last year. The fifth member of the panel, A.M. Khusro, is also a member of the commission.

Disingenuous Explanation: Apart from Raj, who currently heads a research institute in Kerala, his home state, and is a leftist, whatever that means, and Manmohan Singh who is a civil servant, all other members are known in Delhi as men of the establishment. *The Times of India* described Hanumantha Rao and Khusro as 'lightweight' which may be unkind but there is nothing light about the weight the others carry—and have carried for a long time—in the corridors of power.

Therefore the explanation of the prime minister's office that the panel consists of economists 'outside' the government system seems disingenuous, to say the least. According to sources in the prime minister's office, there was indeed a proposal to get together a panel of advisers outside the government system but it was apparently shot down as some of them would have to be drawn from the private sector and the prime minister's office was not too keen to be associated in public with men close to business houses. The present body consists of people who are politically safe and the fact that at least two of them—Chakravarty and Raj—have a leftist image is an added factor in their favour. When in trouble—political trouble—Mrs Gandhi has always turned left, beginning with the nationalisation of banks at the time of her life-and-death struggle with the elders in her party in 1969.

The Chakravarty panel could also be a gimmick, a red herring, in more senses than one. After the rout of the ruling party in the two southern states and its indifferent victory in Delhi, we are obviously entering a populist phase in politics.

As it is, there is, if anything, a surfeit of economic advice—and advisers—in the government system. There is, to begin with, Bimal Jalan, the chief economic adviser, who sits in the Finance Ministry only a couple of doors away from Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee's office and is technically the boss of all economists in the Government. As chief economic adviser he has considerable clout with the Planning Commission and
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Gimmick: Then there is Laks
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It is also possible that she ma
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reign aid will not only be a burden
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expose us to pressures," she has
letter to state chief ministers. Was

(From left) , Rao and Khusro: establishment men

Jha and Mukherjee indirectly? Mrs dhi has a subtle way of ticking off people lso indicating which way her mind is ing—and in issuing a warning on gn aid and other commitments, she may been doing just that. After all, why d she use state chief ministers as a ding board for her ideas? They don't iate foreign loans.

The Chakravarty panel could also be a ick, a red herring, in more senses than After the rout of the ruling party in the southern states and its indifferent vic- in Delhi, we are obviously entering a list phase in politics. Once again the omy will come under the pressure of the cal system, instead of the two being ted in tandem, as they have been more s since 1977, when the first non-Cong- government took over at the centre. sts believe in the supremacy of the cal system over the economic system re more easily persuaded to do what the rnment wants, though they generally up messing up both.

Disastrous Phase: The first populist , 1970–71 to 1974–75, was a disaster in omic terms. Only in one year out of five, ational income growth rate cross 5 per year, and in two years it was very close o growth or negative. There were sharp n food production in three out of five and average industrial growth was a y 3 per cent a year. Prices shot up by as as 20 per cent in some years, though was not the Government's fault, and was intense labour unrest towards the of the five-year period. At the end of it n Emergency had to be declared, and at nd of the Emergency, the ruling party rown out. It is not the kind of period Gandhi would forget easily.

MOST of the ills of our economy are well-known and can be traced to the fact that we are not getting h out of our investments. Professor Brahmananda of Bombay University ecently analysed the situation of rising s and falling outputs. In a detailed analysis of productivity trends since 1950, Brahmananda finds that the incremental capital output ratio, that is, the additional capital required to produce a unit of output, has been steadily increasing over the years and is now (for the decade 1970 to 1980) more than twice what it was 20 years ago. It varied between 2.5 and 3 during 1950–60, the remarkable part being that it was more or less the same for all sectors, private and public, commercial as well as non-commercial. By 1970–80, the ratio had doubled to around 6, but there were striking differences as between sectors. For the economy as a whole, it was 6.2, but for the private commercial sector, farm as well as non-farm, it was about 4.5. For public enterprises, however, it was nearly 11, as against only 3, twenty years earlier.

This could mean that the public sector had gone in for more capital-intensive projects than the private sector, but there is no evidence that this was so. In any case, the capital-output ratio for other countries, particularly countries like Japan which has been growing twice as fast as India, was very much less than ours. We are either putting up wrong projects or do not care too much about costs or do not operate them as well as we should, probably all three. No wonder, we are stuck in a situation of diminishing returns.

If Brahmananda is an outsider, the planners might care to listen to B.K. Nehru, very much an insider and an establishment man. In a little noted paper presented at meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) in New Delhi last month, Nehru was highly critical of deteriorating standards of administration in the country, rampant corruption, the rise of vested interests including politicians and government officials and a prolific and very inefficient public sector which offers sinecures to powerful politicians to make money. He is worth quoting at some length:

"A cause of the slow growth of the economy has been the deplorable performance of the public sector. As the 'commanding heights' of the economy, coal, steel, oil, electric power, railway transport, telecommunications, banking and insurance, are all in the public sector and as they are all inefficient, the rest of the economy, which must rely on the inputs they provide, is necessarily hampered. Theoretically, there is absolutely no reason why enterprises owned by the state should be less efficient than those owned by faceless shareholders but in fact they are, and the reasons are also not far to seek. They consist in lack of autonomy in the management, continuous political interference by ministers and bureaucrats in the details of management and in appointments and finally in the low pay of the managers so that the temptation to corruption is great."

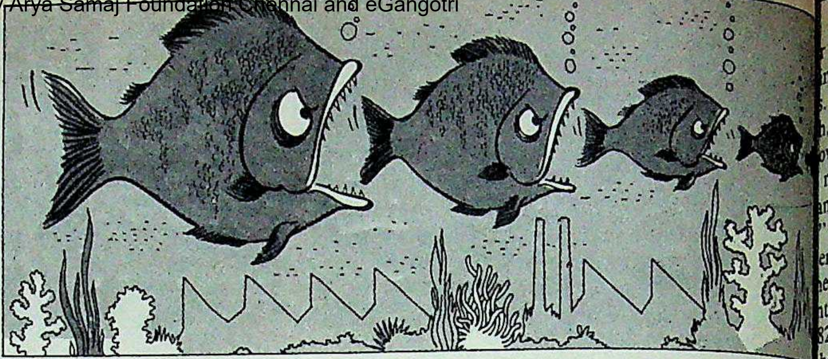
Enormous Drain: It would be of benefit all round, says Nehru, if the Government gets rid by sale or closure of the hundreds of meaningless industrial and commercial enterprises which, because of their losses, act as an enormous and continuous drain on resources. The opposition to this course is of course strong and comes from politicians and others whose vested interests are affected.

All businesses, whether in the public and or private sector, have two dimensions —economic and political. In private business, the economic dimension is dominant, as it should be, for a private business is primarily an economic animal. In the public sector, as it operates in India, it is exactly the other way round. Here the political dimension is more important, for, as Nehru says, it is the politicians who use the economic clout of state enterprises for their own benefit. It is in the interest of politicians to keep state enterprises—and in fact all economic activity—on a short leash and to keep it at a low level of efficiency. For a profitable and independent sector could create its own power system and endanger the politicians. Under the conditions in which the system operates in India, the state enterprises can never be independent and as long as they are dependent on the political system, they will always be inefficient and at the latter's mercy. As long as it is Ghani Khan Chaudhary and not M.S. Gujral who runs the railways, they will always run at a loss.

India's troubles therefore are not economic but political and there is little that high-power panels of academics can do unless the politicians are prepared for the kind of surgery that is necessary to keep the two systems apart. The first suggestion I have, says Nehru, is that governments should divest themselves of all functions that can be performed—and performed better —by non-governmental organisations. For a start, I suggest that the new panel, if it is to be really effective, should be enlarged to include persons outside government and not only economists. Economists are in any case a vastly overrated tribe. Europe and America have between them more Nobel Prize economists than *Cordon Bleu* chefs but look at the mess their economies are in!

CORPORATE SECTOR

From Raids To Riches



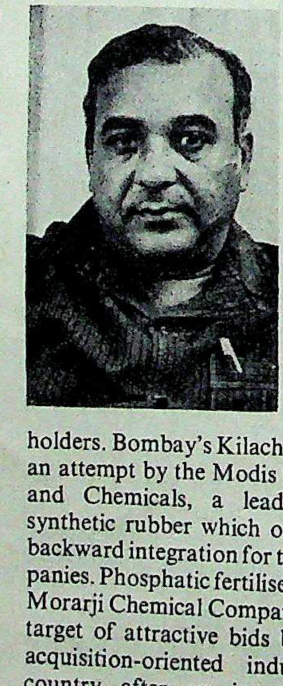
IT HAS become one of the fastest means of growth in the Indian corporate sector. Giving up the relatively staid strategy of promoting new companies and internal expansion to return to the once-popular 'corporate raids' which built up most large Indian groups in the '40s and '50s, industrial groups are increasingly turning to acquisition of existing companies as a means of rapid diversification and growth. In the recent past, take-over wizards from large industrial houses have zeroed in on a string of prosperous companies, rapidly cornered blocks of shares from the market or by purchase from dominant shareholder groups, and moved in for the kill: a take-over of the board of directors which leaves the raider in the driver's seat.

Says S.S. Nadkarni, managing director of the state-owned term lending institution, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI): "A variety of factors have accumulated to trigger the recent spate of take-overs. Division of family holdings and the consequent quarrels, the increased liquidity due to corporate results in the last few years, the fact that large houses can take over companies through investment corporations set up for the purpose, which gives them certain advantages due to a loophole in the law, the disinvestment of foreign shareholdings by multinational corporations which are recession-hit in their own countries, and industrial sickness and financial trouble: all these have fuelled the surge in acquisitions."

Take-over Raids: In a little more than a year, at least nine major corporations with combined sales of over Rs 600 crore, and scores of smaller companies and sick units have fallen to acquisition moves a by handful of industrialists. Three, including foreign-owned Ceat Tyres and Bakelite Hylam, have been taken over by Rama Prasad and Gauri Prasad Goenka of the recently-separated Duncan group, two each by the Modis and cigarette industry giant ITC and one each by Nusli Wadia of Bombay Dyeing and B.P. Khaitan's Macheill and Magor group. Even as these take-overs were in process, there were a series of raids on the shareholding of prime industrial corporations including Premier Automobiles Ltd (PAL).

The lure, in each case, was that the companies were ripe for the plucking because of large accumulated reserves, highly profitable operations, ineffective or disunited managements and the possibility of support from public financial institutions which are large shareholders in virtually every major corporation in the country.

Last fortnight many prime take-over candidates were in the grip of fierce take-over battles the entrenched managements putting up last-ditch struggles against encroaching groups and factions of shareholders. Bombay's Kilachand group resisted an attempt by the Modis to grab Synthetics and Chemicals, a leading producer of synthetic rubber which offers a convenient backward integration for the Modi tyre companies. Phosphatic fertilisers giant Dharamsi Morarji Chemical Company (DMCC) was the target of attractive bids by virtually every acquisition-oriented industrialist in the country after an internal feud among shareholders became public. Controversial corporations like National Rayon Corporation (NRC) and Killick Nixon were once again in the news as vicious boardroom battles for control threatened the very existence of the companies. The institutional management of the Sahu Jain group's Jaipur Udyog was in the process of being unseated in a proxy battle.



> **"Division of family holdings, the increased liquidity due to corporate results, the fact that large houses can tak companies through investment corporati up for the purpose, disinvestment of for shareholdings by recession-hit multinati industrial sickness, and financial trou all these have fuelled the surge in acquisitions."**
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> —**S.S. Nadkarni**, managing director, ICICI

Less publicised, but equally thr to existing management groups, attempts through share-cornering over prestigious corporations lik Indian marketing and manufactur lomerate Spencers, biscuits giant B Industries, Malayalam Plantatio equipment company Remington-R J.L. Morison, Son, and Jones.

Successful Coups: The extra successes of the recent past make certain that many of the current will succeed. Starting with twin c coups by the Modis two years ago, acquired Philip Morris Intern Godfrey Phillips and tyre-making stone's Bombay Tyres Internati move towards taking over huge units has rapidly gained moment

R.P. Goenka followed up by the foreign equity and support of C matici, Italy, in Ceat Tyres and, u a base, took over Kamani Engine made a spirited attempt at acquiri Automobiles (INDIA TODAY, Dec 1982). His brother G.P. Goenka b consumer laminates giant Bakeli and tied up enough support to ta early this year.

Explained Harsha Vardhan R.P. Goenka's son who was app naging director of Ceat after the "We have identified acquisitio fastest route to growth and dive r major thrust is in identifying and ng in companies with take-over possi- s. This is a very advantageous means of h, since it involves less investment and own on the gestation period which one normally face if one promoted a new any to manufacture the same pro- ”

erhaps the greatest coup, however, he acquisition of Madras-based India nts by ITC (INDIA TODAY, November 32). Concluding a quiet *in camera* deal he Industrial Development Bank of (IDBI) and other public financial insti- s which owned roughly 51 per cent of mpany's share, the cigarettes and hoteliering giant bought up almost 33 per cent of the share capital for an estimated Rs 10 crore, paying an attractive Rs 30 per share for the controlling interest.

Institutional Strategy: The block sale by institutional investors was a radical departure, since the financial institutions virtually stopped sales of corporate stocks after large-scale unloading of NRC shares in the mid-'70s resulted in a take-over by a group which went on to seriously mismanage the company. But indications were that the IDBI as lead institution had done some rethinking on take-overs and changes of management, and no longer had qualms about handing over turned-about or prosperous companies to managements with a good track record. Public statements by former chairman N.N. Pai, and the role of institutions in take-overs in both Bombay-Burmah Trading Corporation and Standard Batteries reinforced speculation about a shift in policy.

But the spate of take-overs has caused an increasing disquiet in India's corporate world. By end-February, fuelled by reports that the take-overs were causing insecurity and instability for both industrial promoters and shareholders, the phenomenon was hotly debated in news reports, editorials in financial newspapers and shareholder meetings. At PAL's annual general meeting last December, in fact, one irate shareholder

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HE GOENKAS

uccess Story

ALONG with Vittal Mallya of the United Breweries group (INDIA TODAY, August 15, 1982) the uncan Agro-Industries' Goenkas will rely go down in history as kings of the rporate take-over in India. Starting ree generations back down to Harsha ardhan Goenka, who took over as anaging director of the prestigious eat Tyres (1982: sales Rs 205 crore) st year, the Goenkas have steadily ilt up a vast industrial empire rough encroachments and acquisi- ons.

When K.P. Goenka, patriarch of e Duncan Agro faction of the oenka family, died last fortnight, he ft behind an unrivalled record of owth and diversification. Even efore he separated from his brothers 1962, K.P. Goenka began his ex- ansionist career with the take-over of uncans, a British tea plantation mpany, and Anglo-India Jute. hese were swiftly followed by the acqui- ion of the entire holdings of the Cal- tta-based Elias group, including Natio- l Tobacco Company (NTC), Agarpara te, and a number of smaller concerns.

By 1965, K.P. Goenka, with sons ama Prasad, Gauri Prasad and J.P. enka, had acquired Asian Cables from e Bombay-based Kotak family, a arket leader in cables with accumulated sses which took three years to wipe out. on after, the family floated Phillips arbon Black, which today controls, ong with its associate companies Orien- l Carbon and Gujarat Carbon, over 70 r cent of the market for this essential pe industry raw material. In 1968, The oup acquired Balmer Lawrie and Com- ny, a widely-diversified but sick unit which had interests in tea, structural engineering and bridge construction. But four years later, severe labour and financial problems compelled its sale to the Government.

Accelerated Acquisition: With Balmer Lawrie behind them, however, the Duncan group suddenly accelerated its acquisition policy. Around 1972, R.P. Goenka tied up a deal to buy one of the country's most prestigious cotton textile mills, Bombay Dyeing. "But when the deal was all fixed with Neville Wadia, and the papers were virtually signed, sealed and delivered", said one Goenka group insider, "his son Nusli returned from abroad and turned it down." But the Duncan group take-overs continued with Finlay group's Swan Mills in the same year, followed by Jubilee Mills the next year, Sir Cavasjee Jehangir's Coorla Mills around 1975 and the Ahmedabad-based Mangaldas group's Aryodaya Mills in 1978.

Gauri Prasad (left) and Harsha Vardhan Goenka

Meanwhile, in 1974, R.P. Goenka acquired Murphy Radio, which had run into losses and looked like shutting down. This first tentative venture into consumer electronics was consolidated some years later with the take-over of Cinevista, a small television assembling unit. By 1980, after a formal separation of the family holdings left R.P. Goenka the cables, electronics and carbon black companies; G.P. Goenka the tea and tobacco industries, which had been merged into Duncan Agro-Industries; and J.P. Goenka the textile and jute companies; the brothers were each poised for a great leap forward. In the next two years, R.P. Goenka, prime architect of many of the earlier take-overs, managed to acquire Ceat Tyre, Gladstone Lyall—a fibreglass boat manufacturing company which has been restructured to market everything from paan masala to kitchen stoves—and set up two major new ventures, Deccan Fibreglass and Wiltech Blades.

Recession Profits: In the same period G.P. Goenka cornered Bakelite Hylam shares when he learned that the Government-run Best and Crompton was selling a block holding of 11 per cent of the company's equity. Since British Petroleum which owns Bakelite UK is reportedly going through a financial crunch back home, it was an easy matter for the take-over wizard to convince them to put him in control.

J.P. Goenka, meanwhile, has promoted a giant Rs 45 crore phenol and explosives plant in Nagpur. Apart from a tentative bid to acquire Dharamsi Morarji Chemical Company late last year, he is keeping a low profile on the acquisition front. But it is unlikely to last since acquisitions have made the Goenkas what they are. Said Harsh Vardhan Goenka: "I have to admit we've found ourselves quite successful as a growth-oriented group but this is mainly because take-overs are such a good method of expansion. Barring the tax disadvantage, since you really can't do good tax planning with take-overs, it is unbeatable."

insisted on renaming the Duncan Goenka group the "Drunken Goenkas".

Newspaper editorials questioned the propriety of institutional dabbling in changes of management and called for regulations to protect the rights of minority shareholders in the event of a take-over. And fuelled by news of the surreptitious deals struck with ITC and Nusli Wadia, a heated controversy arose about the validity and legal propriety of institutions selling the controlling blocks in prosperous companies to large MRTP houses.

STARTING from the mid-'50s, when they began large-scale financing, underwriting and investments in the private corporate sector, the public financial institutions have accumulated a vast stake in equity shares of virtually every major company. In addition, convertibility options on term loans, which allow lending institutions to convert up to 20 per cent loans into equity have increased the public sector holding in private companies. Total institutional investment in corporate equity alone, as a result, is today over Rs 750 crore of which the Unit Trust of India, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and the General Insurance Corporation control over Rs 600 crore. In addition, a recommendation by the Dutt Committee in 1970 ensured that the institutions began placing nominee directors on company boards to protect their investment, giving them direct control of corporate functioning.

Today, in fact, the financial institutions hold over 15 per cent of the equity of virtually every major industrial company in the country, and up to or exceeding 50 per cent in many and they are represented either through nominees or by invited directors on most. In the past the Government has often exercised this control to take over sick or marginal units in which mounting losses threaten both small investors and the institutional investment in the company. Often institutions have been instrumental in inducting professional managers and turning them around or even handing sick units over to entrepreneurial groups capable of effecting the recovery. Till last year, however, the moves never resulted in the insecurity or disquiet of today.

Watershed Case: But the ITC-India Cements deal, which first came to light last October, changed all that. Within days of the news breaking out, E.R. Krishnamurthy, executive director of the Madras Stock Exchange, and R.M. Ramanathan, its president, had sent detailed representations to the Central Government objecting to the "secret parleys" between institutions and private corporations leading to distortions in the price structure which worked to the detriment of the minority shareholders.

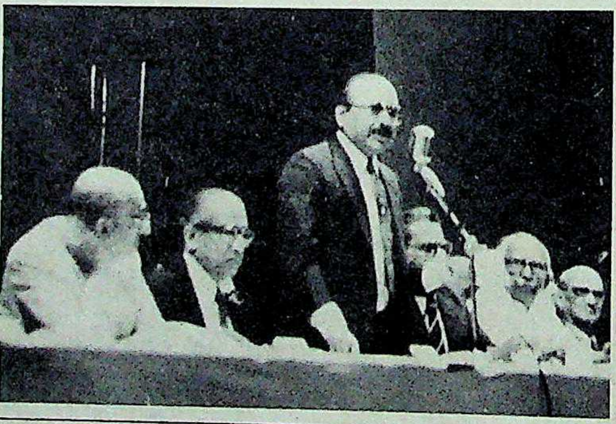
Arguing that in the US, Britain and other developed economies the small shareholder is protected because matching offers have to be made to every shareholder by the buying company, the memorandums sent to the Finance Ministry, the Company Law Department and financial institutions alleged motivations in both the manner of the sale and speed with which the share transfer was registered in "double-quick time" without clearance from the Company Law Board under various statutory requirements of the Companies Act and the MRTP Act.

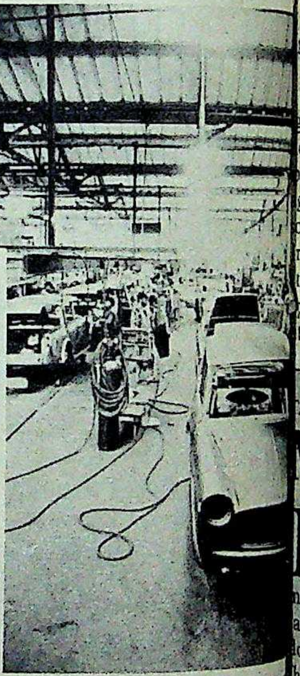
The memorandums and the press controversy which followed sought to indict the institutions for indulging in unsettling practices. "Investigations are instituted and charges framed," read Ramanathan's second note to the Finance Ministry dated November 24, "for unhealthy rigging up of share prices in cases where transactions of this nature are conducted between individuals. Such actions are understandable and in the public interest. Why then discriminate and permit institutions to flout all basic norms and resort to such unhealthy practices with impunity?"

Buying Spree: Hot on the he India Cements sale, however, cam four more "deals" reportedly struck tutional managers: in PAL, where in institutions led by LIC sold a large shares on the market at the same R.P. Goenka was on a buying Kamani Engineering where Goenka tually handed the company on a pla though the company's professional ment has run it brilliantly well for five years; in Bombay-Burmah where Nusli Wadia was sold roug cent of the company's equity to en to take it over, and in Standard where, contrary to the decision Kamani Engineering, the Char gro promoted the company and ran it fully for three decades was uncerem ousted once L.D. Char died.

"The financial institutions should have no role in management other than as ordinary shareholders. There should be regulations to check them from destabilising managements just because they like somebody's face."

—VINOD DOSHI, chairman, PAL





Doshi addressing the PAL shareholders in 1982 and (right) the Premier assembly line

The financial institutions le played a surprisingly direct role the take-over attempts. In each of panies concerned, combined in holdings exceed those of any group holders—51 per cent in India Ce 50 per cent in Kamani Engineeri cent in Standard Batteries, roug cent in PAL and 25 per cent in Burmah—and in three the institu substantially in control of the bo

Said Dr N.L. Hingorani, the nally appointed chairman of Ka neering and professor of the Nat tute of Bank Management, who past decade built up a formidable rofessional manager: "The real fear in ases is not about disposal of shares or anges of management, it is the growing about the judgement of institutions in like this. The question is: should the tions support the professional manats which bring up a marginal unit ch is in line with our professed aim of oting the professionalisation of gement—or should they bring in an fied owner to run companies?"

Controversial Role: The industrialists ed by the institutional decisions are to accuse them of being motivated by e compulsions. "The problem in our any has been amicably settled, and kas sold us the 54,000-odd shares they purchased when institutions were ding," said Vinod Doshi, PAL chair"but this has made it clear that the ial institutions should no role whatsoever in gement other than as ordishareholders protecting rights. It is certainly , and there should be reons to check this, for them port groups or destabilise gements just because they omebody's face.

n Standard Batteries, likethe institutions appear to played into the hands of tta-based B.P. Khaitan. After L.D. Char's death in mid-1981—he was chairman and managing director and left no family members on the board—tacit institutional support for Macneill and Magor, the minority shareholders, ensured that his son Raghav Char and widow would have no say in the company's affairs.

Pai: liberal approach

Late last December, at an open confrontation at Standard's annual general meeting, the institutional directors voted with the Khaitans to defeat two resolutions for the appointment of Raghav Char and his uncle T.S. Champaknath to the board. Said Char: "There is a strong need for legislation to control arbitrary changes of management, because otherwise this will be a disincentive to investment and growth. If people start distrusting the institutions' judgement or motives they would prefer to remain small rather than expand and face the possibility of institutional interference once they control some equity."

Varied Standards: More than the institutional decisions themselves it is their apparent arbitrariness which has alarmed industrialists. In the India Cements deal, for instance, the IDBI broke an eight-year-old embargo on selling controlling blocks to industrialists to accept the ITC offer. Since the mid-'70s, when a block sale of NRC shares to the Kapadia group resulted in mismanagement of the company, IDBI instructions have ensured that the institutions have used their shareholdings to support managements from within, without actually transferring shares to them. Yet in both India Cements and Bombay-Burmah the shares were transferred clandestinely and with almost unholy haste to the favoured corporations.

Similarly, three different standards were applied to Kamani Engineering, Standard Batteries and NRC last year. In each a dominant shareholder owning between 14 per cent and 18 per cent of the stocks made moves to gain a position on the board. But while R.P. Goenka was promptly welcomed onto the Kamani board, the Char family in Standard and the Berlia family in NRC were actively opposed and kept out by institutional votes.

Institutional heads, however, emphatically deny any arbitrariness in their decision-making, stating that the changes effected by them have all been in the best interests of the company concerned. J.R. Joshi, who recently retired as chairman of LIC, defended the Standard Batteries decision on the grounds that the company was left leaderless after L.D. Char's death, creating a need which had to be filled. "There is no question of a change of management in Standard Batteries," he said. "L.D. Char's children were too young to manage the company so Khaitan only wants to come in to fill

AKEOVERS

Mixed Blessing

IF THERE are no clear criteria laid down for deciding when financial institutions should effect a change of anagement in a company, the postake-over performance of companies oes not provide any clear vindication of he wisdom of such changes either. Some ompanies have done exceptionally well nder new managements, while others ave continued to do poorly, if not eliberately run into the ground.

Kamani Engineering, for instance, ade losses of over Rs 2 crore each in 974 and 1975. But following the finanal institutions' decision to effect a chage of management, the company has een able to bring about a creditable turn round. Both sales and profits have inreased, and Kamani's Rs 10 shares are ow quoted on the stock exchange at over even times their face value.

Willard India is another success tory. Till 1980, when K.P. Singh ran the ompany, Willard had accumulated loses of over Rs 7 crore. The institutions then facilitated a Bajoria take-over, and Willard has undergone a sea change since then. Production has increased from 8,000 standard battery units montly to over 20,000, and is now billed to hit 30,000. The company has come on to the profit-making list and ranks second in automotive batteries, behind market leaders Chloride.

Success Stories: Asian Cables too was recording losses for successive years before the Goenkas stepped in, and in 1981 made a pre-depreciation profit of Rs 1.6 crore. A more convincing performance has come from the Modis, who have increased production in Bombay Tyres by 60 per cent after gaining control of what was till then a losing concern. The company has now started making profits, and plans to modernize and iron out production bottlenecks in order to increase production by another 20 per cent.

Take-over king Vittal Mallya provides his own success stories, turning around both MEC Ltd and Hindustan Polymers, companies that he acquired a couple of years ago. Both companies had been in the red before their take-over.

But this is far from a universal trend. National Rayon ran into financial trouble before the institutions moved in around 1974. But performance was no better when the company was handed over to the Kapadias, and the institutions had to step in yet again. BIC Mills of Kanpur is another case of a one-time blue chip firm performing poorly under succeeding managements until the Government finally decided to take it over a little more than a year ago.

In a third category of cases, corporate performance has fluctuated irrespective of a change of management. The classic example of this is India Cements, which was making profits under its original management, only to go under immediately before the institutions stepped in as well as during the initial period of institutional control. By the time ITC made its bid to acquire control, the deregulation of cement prices had already helped the company improve its financial position and wipe out its accumulated losses.

The moral of the story seems simple: in a business environment governed by numerous complex factors, take-overs are no panacea for ailing companies.

the vacuum created. Should we not solve this problem by inducting him?"

In fact, however, Char's son Raghav is 29 and heads the export division of IAEC, another family company, and T.S. Champaknath, chairman and managing director of IAEC, is an experienced industrialist with no stigma of mismanagement to disqualify him from representing the family shareholding on the board.

Differing Arguments: IDBI's former chairman N.N. Pai, who as head of the apex institutions was possibly the architect of the liberalised approach to take-overs, argued last fortnight that people had over-reacted to the situation because of a lack of knowledge. In India Cements, he explained, the institutions had first offered their shareholding to the original promoters at Rs 5 per share only to be refused on the grounds that they would pay only Rs 3.50. Even when this fell through, he stated, an offer had been made to the Tamil Nadu Government to take the shares over at the same price, but they too did not come through.

"The real fear in these cases is not about disposal of shares or the changes of management, it is the growing doubt about the judgement of institutions in cases like this."

—N.L.HINGORANI, chairman, Kamani Engineering

"When the partial decontrol policy for cement was announced last year and the industry suddenly became profitable," said Pai, "ITC came forward with an offer of Rs 30 and since this offer was beneficial to the institution because ITC was willing to take over Ashok Paper Mills in which we have a stake of Rs 48 crore, we considered it."

However, even institutional managers are not agreed on this sequence of events. A senior investment manager in a financial institution insisted that no offer was made to the India Cements promoter group or the Tamil Nadu Government, nor do institutions ever make offers to sell blocks of shares. "In fact the promoter group and the Tamil Nadu Government came to us with offers," he said, "which we refused because we felt that their offer of Rs 5 per share was too low, and besides we did not want to trust the original promoters with control as they were bickering among themselves. In the case of the Government we refused because they were not willing to guarantee the company's liabilities."

Suggestions: While the Company Law Board deliberates on the final outcome of the ITC-India Cements case—a petition by the India Cements promoter group challenges the transfer on the grounds that it violates the Companies and MRTP acts—the take-overs issue had already reached an institutional platform. Last fortnight the continuing debate on acquisitions prompted Chartered Bank to organise a seminar and lecture tour for J.M. Hignett, director-general of the City of London panel on take-over and mergers. Making a forceful case for an enforceable code on take-overs modelled on the City of London code Hignett in his talks in Delhi and Bombay said that the interests of minority shareholders could not be safeguarded unless all shareholders are treated equally in a take-over bid.

Supporting the suggestion already made last year by Krishnamurthy and Ramanathan of the Madras Stock Exchange, Hignett said that in Britain, the US and most modern free market economies, the system of making an open offer to all shareholders had proved to be an effective tool for regulating take-overs, and offered small shareholders the same benefits which the sellers of the controlling interest get.

Meanwhile; stock-market raids and take-over attempts aimed at top-rung companies continue. Fuelled by the huge liquid cash resources generated in industry due to withheld excise payments (INDIA TODAY, February 15) the bids for acquiring controlling interest in corporations have merely shifted from the institutional doorstep to the stock-market while a final outcome on the India Cements case is awaited. But the possibilities of growth are so great, that the phase is unlikely to end.

When Goenka acquired Ceat, in fact, the company had almost Rs 24 crore in liquid resources, which allowed the group to acquire Kamani Engineering, make a bid for PAL and possibly acquire shares in a host of other take-over candidates. Said an expert: "The beauty of using excise-generated funds is that the money is not internally generated so you do not pay tax on it, and, even more important, you can expand your empire with money which is not even yours. If these companies win their excise cases, they will have to pay 60 per cent of that money in income tax, and if they lose all of it will go in excise."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

KERALA

Losing Interest

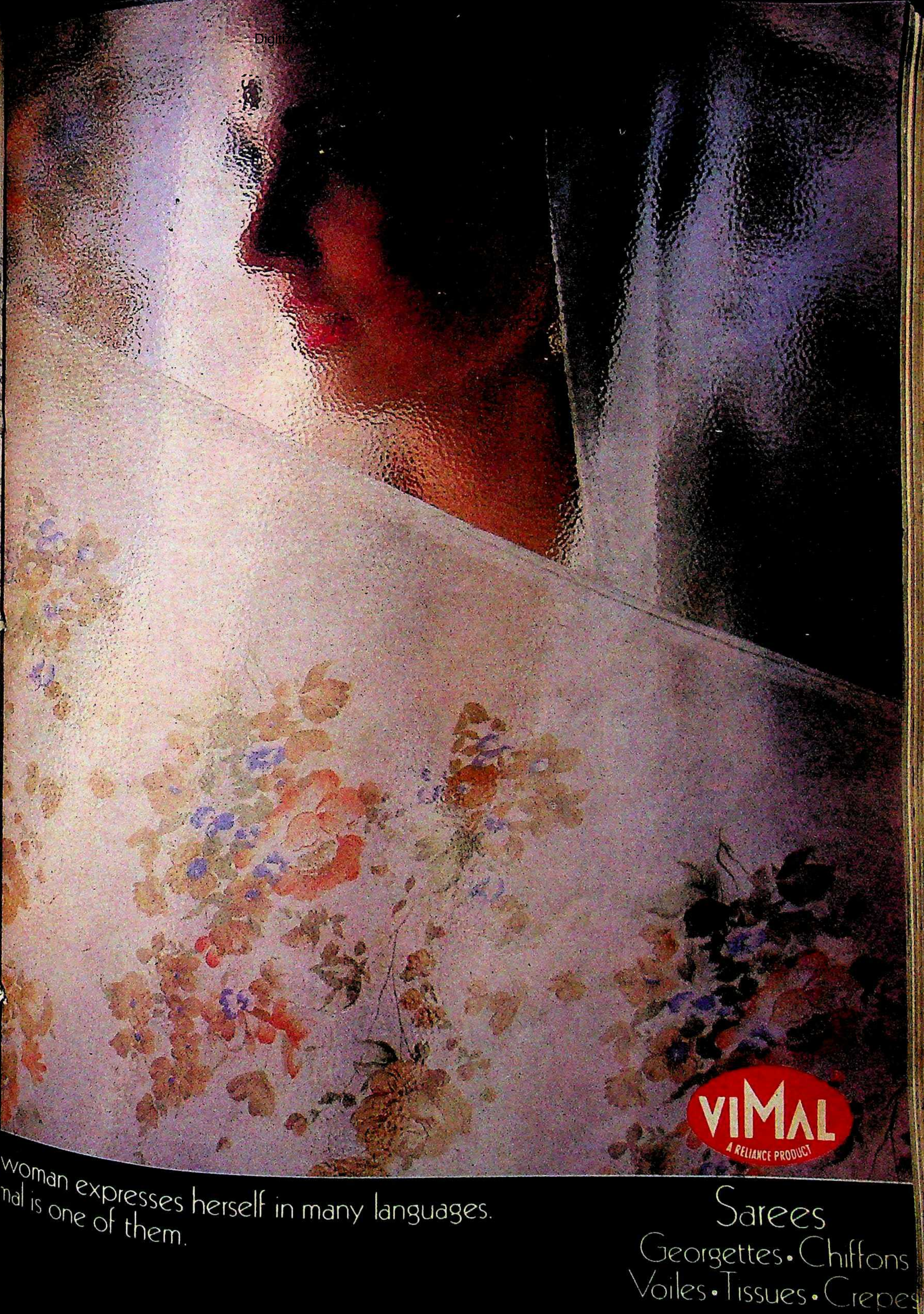
ISLAMIC fundamentalism has Kerala—in a most startling way bankers in the state have been work out how to cope with depos refused to accept interest.

Khadeeja Beevi, an elderly wi lives in Chavakkad in Trichur distr such. Khadeeja's sons in the Gulf Rs 15,000 every month which she puts in her bank every month. B Khadeeja went to the bank last for was surprised to find more mone account than she had deposited.

Practice Forbidden: The expla course, was simple enough. The 2,000 was the interest on the mon savings bank account. But Khadee from pleased to hear this. Instead med annoyedly: "This is *haram*. Th says, 'thou shall not give or take i Finally when Khadeeja adamantl to take interest, her bank manager her savings bank account into a account which does not pay intere

Another example is P. Hydr who is getting so much money from that he is building a mosque on h estate near Chavakkad. To keep all managers in the area happy Haji some money in all the banks. But devout that when the scheduled an ative banks in Chavakkad recentl giving out gifts to attract new dep refused them. Says Haji: "It is no another form of interest."

The no-interest wave is swel statistics available show that out of banks in Kerala nearly 1,000 have free accounts held by Muslims. M the Muslim dominated Malabar Varkala in Trivandrum district. A to unofficial estimates there are ne crore worth of interest-free dep Chavakkad alone there are said counts worth Rs 5 crore. One na bank in the area has 10 per cent of free accounts. Says S.G. Pai, the m the Canara Bank in Pavaratty: about 10 interest-free accounts he vout Muslims with substantial Most of them could easily live interest but they refuse to do so. that the most ironic part is that wh short of money they pledge their and then take it back later—aft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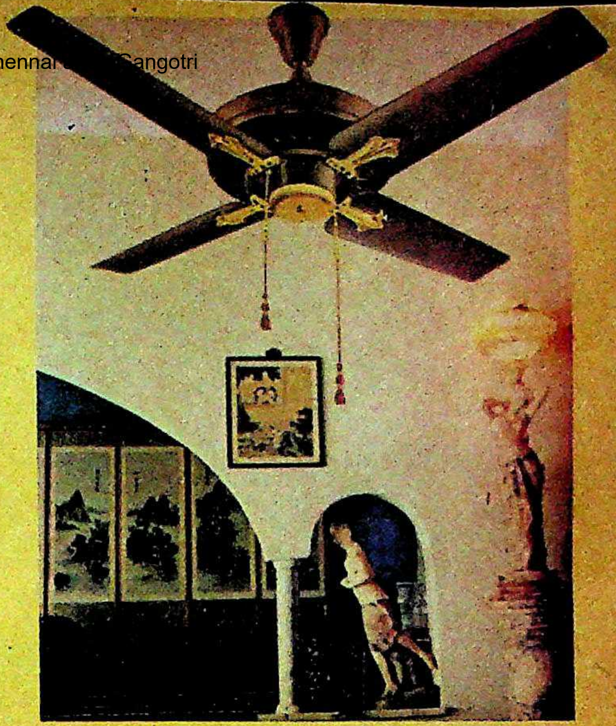

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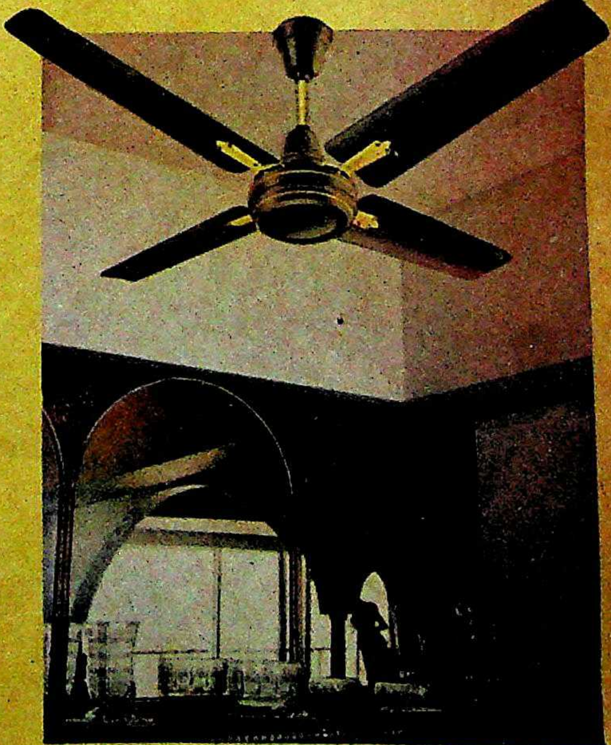

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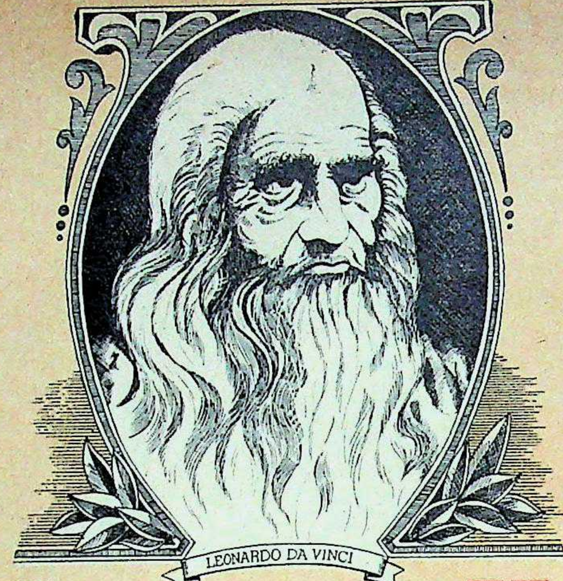

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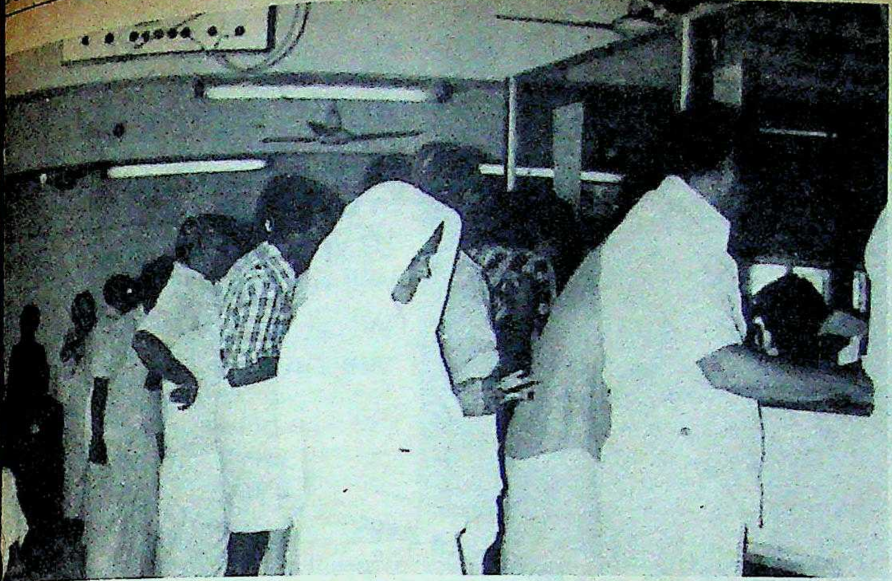


A Muslim woman awaits her turn at a bank: interest-free conscience

erest, as the bank rules require.

New Institutions: Several Muslim intutions, like the Jamaat-e-Islami, have pped in to help Muslims who have qualms out operating through the banks. Says V.K. Hamsa, the president of the Kerala unit of the Jamaat-e-Islami: "If the Government approves we will start some interest-free banking institutions in certain Muslim pockets in the state." In Ponnani, another area heavily dominated by Muslims, a trust has been set up which offers interest-free loans of up to Rs 1,000 to the needy fishermen of the area.

Some Muslims, however, are said to have found ingenious ways to appease their consciences while accepting large amounts as interest. An official of the Indian Overseas Bank, Chavakkad, describes the case of a man who has put Rs 500 in his savings banks account and given strict instructions that no interest should be paid on it. But he has another Rs 2 lakh in fixed deposits and he has not the slightest hesitation about accepting interest on it. Said he: "The savings bank account is for my conscience.

But no matter how Muslims feel about accepting interest, the banks are doing roaring business. In the 20 km stretch between Vadanappally and Chavakkad, which is known as the mini-Gulf of Trichur, there are 42 banks where there were only four some years ago. Says V.M. Sudheeran, a local MLA: "The unprecendented Gulf boom has sent a tidal wave of money flowing into Chavakkad. Today there are more banks here than *paan* shops."

—SREEDHAR PILLAI in Chavakkad

T.J. BATA

Fancy Footwork

THOMAS John Bata is the world's shoemaker. Bearer of the name that millions wear on their feet, Bata, 68, owes his profession to an anscestor's whim in 1620. "Farm prices were too low, and my ancestor decided that since people needed shoes he might as well make them." For the nine generations since then, the Batas have been shoemakers—first in their native Czechoslovakia and then increasingly in other lands. Thomas Bata, now based in Canada, has an empire spread over 95 countries, producing and selling 300 million pairs of shoes every year—50 million of them in India.

Bata was in Delhi last fortnight, heading a delegation of the newly-formed Canada-India Business Council. Business Editor T.N. NINAN *talked to him about his company's operation in India. Excerpts:*

Q. ***What do you hope to achieve from this visit?***

A. We hope to bring about a greater awareness in India of Canadian possibilities. There has been a resurgence of Canadian interest in India, and the Canada-India Business Council was formed nine months ago to give a push to Indo-Canadian business ties.

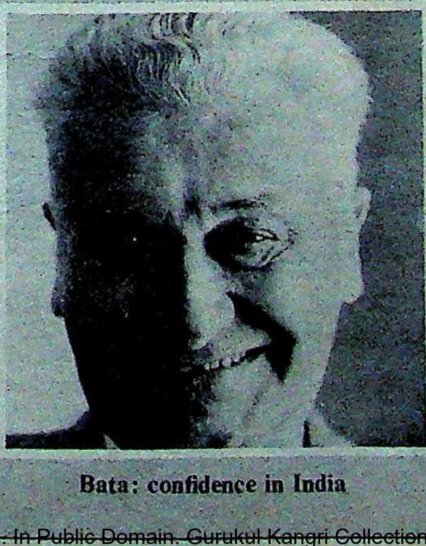
Q. ***Is the new interest in India a result of the recession in the West?***

A. I would say it is more an indication of rising confidence in the future of India. The recent liberalisations in economic policy have helped in this. While other countries have failed to keep their financial obligations, India has always kept them. This is now attracting more attention.

Q. ***Does this mean India's image abroad is changing in any way?***

A. India has always been well regarded by Canadian business. Now there is the perception that more opportunities are available.

Q. ***What about the restrictions imposed on foreign business operations?***



Bata: confidence in India

A. Well, these do have a dampening effect on people's interest. But our experience has been that in practice one can live and operate successfully in these circumstances.

Q. ***How are Bata India's operations linked to your other companies?***

A. There is a constant flow of people: Indians go to Europe and North America to study designs there. The designs for our life-style shoes, North Star, came from Canada. Ladies' fashions come primarily from Italy, and the sport-shoe designs also come from abroad. At the same time, a good deal of the inspiration for designs in the West comes from India. India has contributed a tremendous amount to western fashion.

Q. ***Why you continue to reserve your top managerial slots for non-Indians?***

A. It is true that the managing director and deputy managing director are non-Indians. But we have several Indians at the general manager level. We have only four non-Indians in Bata India, and several Bata companies abroad are headed by people from India.

Q. ***Bata in India seems to be changing the kind of shoes it offers Indian customers. Is this true?***

A. Yes, we have gone in for more life-style shoes. Even for our bread and butter products, like canvas shoes, we have given them a fashion flair. And I must say the market has responded.

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8 ,,	Rs. 2382.50
9 ,,	Rs. 2655.50
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evenly on the surface of the shoes.
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ONOMIC SURVEY

On The Decline

F A SWALLOW doesn't make a spring, a drought should not make an autumn. It wasn't in any case a severe drought, ugh the Government insists it was, in the y first line of its *Economic Survey* released week. It was actually the mildest of ughts in the last nine years and is estiited to have cut down farm output by no re than 3 per cent this year. A country of ia's size and capacity should have taken h a small dent in farm production in its de but the fact that it hasn't is probably most disturbing factor in the economic ation today.

The rates of growth of all sectors are n—national income from 5.2 per cent year to 2 per cent, industrial production m 8.6 to 4 per cent, electricity from 10 to 7 cent. Only imports have apparently gone from 9 to 16 per cent and exports just ginally from 16 to 18 per cent. Foreign ange reserves have also improved, alt certainly because of the access to rnational Monetary Fund (IMF) funds, by and large the picture is of one steady down in the economy, accelerated ps by the drought but caused by factors r than the drought. The survey dwells nly on the current bleak situation but -term prospects may not be very rosy r, though a good monsoon next year improve things a bit.

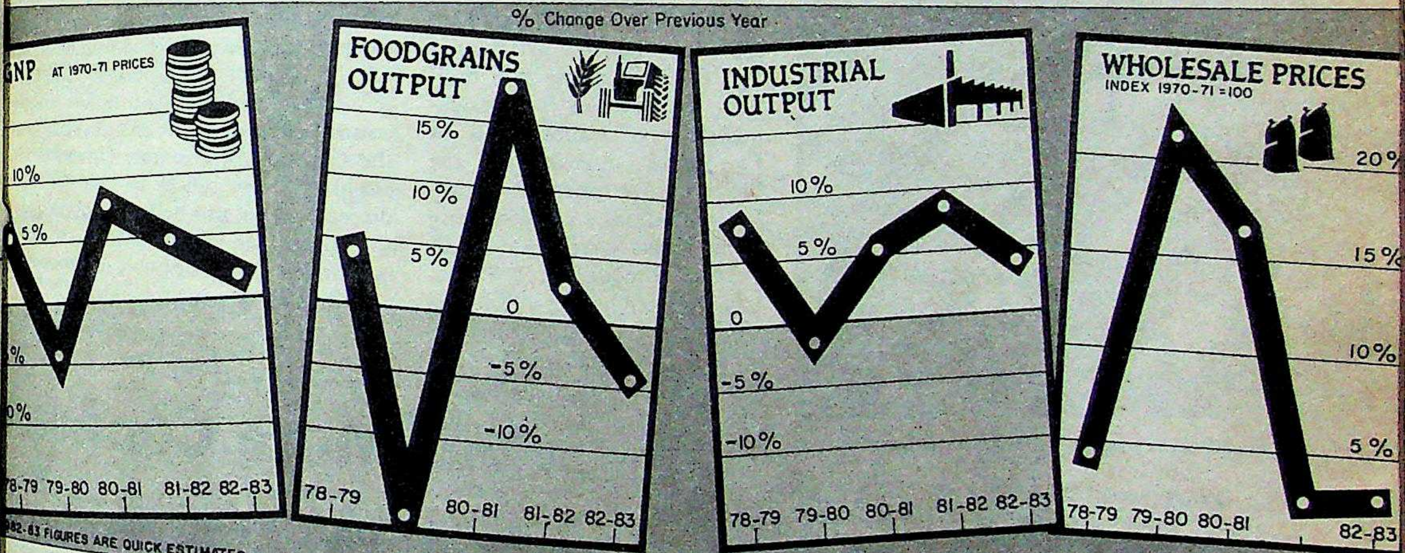
Because of the cyclical character of the soon, economic activity in India should ewed in five-year averages rather than by year. As far as national income is erned, for the first three five-year perbeginning with 1974–75 to 1978–79, there were two good years (growth rate 7 per cent and above), one average year (4 to 6 per cent growth) and two bad years (less than 3 per cent). This has now been reduced to just one good year, two average years and two bad years. This is true for national income as well as farm production but there has been some improvement in industry over the last 10 years. There used to be one good year, two average years and two bad years for the first two five-year periods but now there are two good years, one average year and two bad years. It is, however, just a matter of time before the industrial sector also packs up.

Bleak Prospect: Going by this pattern, it is likely that next year (1983–84) will be either an average or a poor year, with a rate of growth of national income less than 6 per cent at the most. By the same token, 1984–85 is also likely to be either a poor or an average year, with roughly the same rate of growth, and possibly much worse. The last good year was actually 1980–81 (the year Mrs Gandhi took over from Charan Singh) and it is unlikely that there would be another good year until 1985–86, which is a long way off.

The Government admits that things are serious. "The fact remains," says the survey, "that despite increases of 9 million hectares in the irrigation potential and about 2 million tonnes in the fertiliser use since 1978–79, there has not been any significant increase in the level of foodgrain production. As for industry, its state is a matter of concern, notwithstanding the substantial gains that have been made in terms of expansion and diversification of the industrial structure in the last 35 years." Does the Government propose to improve the situation by, say, giving tax reliefs, particularly in excise duty? Perish the thought. "An across-the-board reduction in excise duties, apart from its adverse revenue implication, is unlikely to provide a lasting answer to the problems of Indian industry," says the survey firmly, throwing the book at all those who have been arguing that high prices are holding down industrial demand and the Government should worry less about its own till than the cash in consumers' pockets.

The air of self-satisfaction on the rising trend in industrial investment is rather deceptive. The survey makes much of the fact that consents for raising capital increased by nearly 18 per cent from about Rs 800 crore in 1980–81 to Rs 933 crore in 1981–82, and so did the total sanctions by financial institutions for most major industries including textiles, paper, chemicals, steel and machinery. But since prices of capital machinery went up by 10 per cent during the year, the increase in real investment was just about 10 per cent. On the basis of a capital-output ratio of 6 to 1, this rate of real capital investment is just about sufficient to yield an industrial growth rate of a little more than 1 per cent a year, not a big deal as it is made out to be.

The only bright feature in a gloomy scenario is that prices have been more or less contained and inflation has been held at bay. The wholesale price index went up by slightly less than 3 per cent last year as against 2.4 per cent in the previous year. But it is not true that prices went down *despite* deceleration in industry. Prices went down *because* of deceleration or recession in industry, as they have all over the world, but what a heavy price the country is paying for deflation! The budget will show whether the country will continue to pay that price. —JAY DUBASHI



82-83 FIGURES ARE QUICK ESTIMATES

INDIA TODAY Chart by B.K. Sharma

SPORTS GOODS

Low Scoring

FOR AN industry whose future rests on its lucrative export potential, the growth rate of the Indian sports goods industry has levelled off to an unimpressive canter. With the home market consuming a bare 15 per cent, bad infrastructural planning, lack of adequate export incentives from the Government and the adverse impact of inter-state politics on raw material procurement have cumulatively contributed to a situation where Indian exports, which stood at Rs 25 crore a decade ago, are currently targeted only at Rs 35 crore. While Jullundur, where 500 of the industry's 700 units are located, has clearly come a long way since the partition split the flourishing Punjab industry asunder, the export statistics of leading competitor Pakistan stand in stark contrast. From 1978-79 to 1982-83, Pakistan's exports have doubled from Rs 21.2 crore to Rs 45 crore.

Putting finishing touches to footballs: poor infrastructure

Said Anil Mehta, secretary, Sports Goods Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association: "Indian sports goods industry is on the verge of a complete collapse. The price of raw material has gone up 15 to 17 per cent over the last one year, besides its non-availability. The Pakistan Government's recent fillip to the industry—cash incentive at 22 per cent of the value of the exports and duty drawback at 15 per cent—has made Indian products non-competitive in world markets." Despite pleas from the industry, the Indian Government has continued to offer cash incentives of only 10 to 15 per cent, and duty drawbacks of a mere 3 to 5 per cent.

The industry's problems have been further compounded by the obstructionist attitudes of raw material supplying state governments. For example, the Jammu and Kashmir Government anxious to develop its own sports goods industry banned the export of willow, a monopoly produce vital for the manufacture of cricket bats and wickets, in 1976. While humidity in the valley makes the production of quality bats impossible, the modern automatic plant which Pioneer Sports set up near Srinagar continues to suffer idle capacity, while some units in Jammu have been sending only semi-finished handles to Jullundur. Though entrepreneurs continue to offer double the price that the local units are paying to an unrelenting state government, a flourishing smuggling pipeline has jacked up manufacturing costs. Said Prem Jain, a major exporter of cricketing equipment: "A free movement would cut down the price of bats by 10 per cent."

Indifferent Planning: Similarly in the case of hockey, while the increased popularity of the sport has brought with it a boom in the demand for hockey sticks, the mulberry they are made of has continued to be of a poorer quality compared to Pakistan's due to lack of organised cultivation. Though the plains of Punjab are ideal for mulberry production and Pakistan grows fine mulberry on reserves in Changamanga near Lahore and in Faisalabad appeals to the Punjab Government to establish plantations on its sprawling canal banks have been of no avail. Consequently, a Pakistani stick fetches Rs 125 in the world market as compared to Rs 85 for an Indian one. Echoed Mehta: "Last year, Jullundur made four lakh sticks and earned Rs 1 crore and Pakistan earned Rs 2 crore with a little more than half that number."

The indifferent tale of infrastructural deficiency continues into leather, a major raw material for the manufacture of balls and boxing equipment. With the only government tannery nearly out of operation, it is first transported to Madras for tanning and finishing, and then used in Jullundur. Bemoaned exporter Prem Gupta: "Quality leather is our major headache. While the Government dilly-dallies, we are too small to set up our own tannery." With a single order of Rs 60 lakh from K-mart, a US departmental store chain, Gupta is exporting footballs worth Rs 2.24 crore this year.

Apportioning Blame: Nevertheless, the industry cannot escape all responsibility for its own plight. Commented industry veteran Dina Nath Mehta acidly: "There has been no effort at research and development. Why blame the Government alone when we have done nearly nothing. But for the skills of artisans, we would have not scored the present heights." Mehta, a sport enthusiast, lamented that there had been no effort by th stry to popularise sport in the countr he: "Consider a country of India's siz suming sports goods worth Rs 10 cror it should be spending Rs 100 crore. No the exports are good but what abo home market?"

In addition, the profits of this b which is still organised as a cottage ind are dependent on workers it has pro little incentives to. Except for a few uni have regular organised workers, 80 pe of the manufacturing is handled by wage earners in dingy Jullundur Labour welfare efforts lack woefully benefits of fixed wage earners are de them. Lamented craftsman Parshota 40: "In return for our skill and sweat, paltry wages which have dwindled in th three years. While I was getting Rs football last year, I now get only Rs 5- can only stitch a maximum of three d

For an industry which has, accord experts, an annual export potential of crore, besides creating a good home m the portents are grim. The Jullundur b of the Export Promotional Counc remained headless, despite the effo council chairman C. Venkatraman. N the Central nor the state Governme persuaded any officer to take up re directorship of this body. Of this unc the Asiad, for which most of the sp equipment had to be imported from a was only an acerbic reminder.

—GOBIND TH

THE MARKETS

More Confide

WHEN Mars is in conjunctio Venus and the Great B simultaneously on its astrologers mutter about the possib some cosmic collapse. It doesn't h happen, of course, and can be avo luck or good management or bo though such evil conjunctions ge coincide with the budget most peop that the finance minister will ride the

The markets seem to be much confident this year than at any tim 1979. In fact, most leading scrips in B have recovered substantially from th slump, particularly after the announ of hikes in diesel and kerosene pric hike points to a soft budget, with po few concessions to industry in view rather sharp drop in the industrial rate in the current year. Concessions residents are also on the cards and obviously being interpreted as a factor.

There is a steady flow of enco

ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close 18.2.83	Change on Fortnight
	1983			
Ambalal Sarabhai	17.75	14.00	14.50	0.50
Ashok Leyland	36.50	33.50	34.65	(0.10)
Asian Paints	35.00	32.00	32.50	(0.50)
Associated Cement	406.00	366.00	375.50	0.50
Atlas Copco	29.75	28.00	28.25	nil
Bajaj Auto	1.200.00	1,025.00	1.030.00	(20.00)
Ballarpur	42.80	40.00	41.10	1.10
Baroda Rayon	257.00	224.00	227.50	(5.50)
Birla Jute	54.60	47.60	48.70	1.10
Blow Plast	74.00	69.00	69.00	(1.00)
Bombay Dyeing	75.00	65.50	69.00	3.50
Brooke Bond	28.15	27.20	28.00	0.10
Calico Mills	246.50	207.50	209.00	(19.00)
Ceat Tyres	202.50	195.00	200.00	5.00
Century Spinning	810.00	695.00	810.00	71.50
Chloride India	57.50	51.00	51.00	(3.50)
Colgate	94.00	84.00	90.50	4.50
Delhi Cloth Mills.	43.31	32.31	41.19	4.88
Dunlop India	22.00	20.10	21.50	1.15
East India Hotels	22.00	20.75	21.75	0.25
Escorts	45.00	39.75	41.81	1.69
Food Specialities	65.00	61.00	63.00	nil
Glaxo	31.50	23.50	24.00	nil
Guest Keen Williams	21.75	20.15	20.30	(0.10)
Gujarat Fertilisers	490.00	441.50	447.00	(2.00)
Gwalior Rayon	52.00	45.00	51.00	3.75
Hindustan Aluminium	36.0	32.10	36.60	3.45
Hindustan Lever	56.00	53.00	55.25	1.25
Hindustan Motors	35.10	28.70	31.46	2.16
Hoechst Dyes	35.50	26.25	26.50	nil
Indian Aluminium	20.00	18.10	18.10	(0.50)
Indian Cable	23.00	21.80	22.05	0.05
Indian Explosives	24.15	22.10	24.05	0.65
Indian Hotels	57.00	50.50	50.50	(3.50)
Indian Organic	28.50	25.50	26.25	(0.25)
Indian Oxygen	34.40	31.30	34.10	2.50
Ingersoll-Rand	87.00	82.00	84.00	nil
ITC	44.85	39.30	40.50	1.20
Jayshree Tea	27.75	20.35	20.75	3.95
J.K. Synthetics	57.50	47.00	50.50	2.10
Kesoram	65.40	57.30	57.30	(0.40)
Kinetic Engineering	163.00	76.00	76.00	(79.00)
Kothari (Madras)	24.00	23.00	23.40	(0.10)
Larsen & Toubro	56.00	53.00	55.00	0.50
Lipton	16.20	14.20	15.80	(0.05)
Lohia Machines	60.25	42.50	49.50	1.50
Madura Coats	22.60	19.50	21.75	(0.85)
Mahindra & Mahindra	56.00	47.00	47.00	(2.00)
Motor Industries	257.50	250.00	255.50	2.50
Mukand Iron	24.00	21.75	22.50	0.25
MRF	26.00	21.75	21.75	(0.75)
National Organic	207.50	181.25	182.50	(3.75)
Nirlon	39.25	37.75	38.50	(0.50)
Orient Paper	47.00	41.10	43.20	1.70
Peico Electronics	29.25	28.75	29.20	0.35
Premier Auto	376.00	310.00	329.00	2.00
Pressure Cooker	29.00	27.50	28.00	nil
Ranbaxy	40.75	36.00	39.25	2.75
Reliance	183.00	172.50	174.50	0.25
Shaw Wallace	39.05	35.25	37.60	(0.15)
Shriram Fibres	30.62	27.87	27.87	(1.13)
Siemens	44.25	42.00	42.00	(0.50)
SPIC	17.50	15.25	16.10	(0.30)
Straw Products	46.80	42.50	43.00	0.35
Tata Chemicals	67.00	54.00	57.00	1.00
Tata Steel	1 301.50	245.00	252.50	(5.50)
Telco	455.00	407.00	414.00	(3.00)
Texmaco	45.00	39.25	44.50	3.30
Union Carbide	25.10	23.00	24.00	0.40
Usha Martin Black	24.80	22.90	22.90	(0.10)
Voltas	282.00	262.00	265.00	1.00
Zuari Agro	25.60	22.40	24.70	1.50
Unit Trust (sale)	13.60	13.60	13.60	nil

company results. Herdillia Chemicals and Lipton have announced better results for the first half of 1982-83. Lipton has nearly wiped out accumulated losses and is likely to show a profit for the year. Deepak Nitrite and Indian Aluminium have also done better but the latter has cut its dividend, the second cut since 1980. Companies that were not expected to do quite as well have also announced impressive results. Mahindra and Mahindra, for instance, has increased its turnover as well as profits, though the dividend rate remains frozen at last year's. In fact, sales of light commercial vehicles have picked up despite rumours to the contrary.

Promising Signs: The budget will indicate which way the Government mind is working on the question of reflation. Despite a serious drought which is said to have cut into foodgrain production by nearly 7 million to 9 million tonnes, prices seem to have been held more or less in check. Next year is expected to be a bumper year for foodgrains. The market expects this might help the Government to make up its mind about reflating the economy and pushing ahead with more liberalisation. If that happens, the stock markets should boom, for inflation is always good for industry. In fact, deflation is one reason why industry has been rather depressed almost throughout the year, and why stock prices have also remained more or less subdued. With world oil prices coming down and a bumper food year on the cards, the faint hearts in the treasury might summon up a little courage and say 'boo' to inflation and push ahead.

Industry-wise, this should help engineering companies the most as they have been affected rather badly by the crunch in demand and the general slowdown in the economy. Most engineering shares are quoted very much below their potential and should profit by the change in government policy. Synthetics are also showing some life—Century has crossed the 800-mark after a long time—but not much improvement should be expected unless there is a major shift in import policy, which is unlikely, as long the IMF breathes down our neck.

A number of FERA companies have now more or less got out of the FERA straitjacket and are worth watching. Like ITC and Indian Oxygen, they too may go places and the time to get hold of them is just when they shed the FERA label. Glaxo is a good example. Another, though not in the same class, is the old ICI group which will now centre its activities around just one company, Indian Explosives. This particular company is said to have done well during the year but others have not. The amalgamation should, however, pay dividends in due time, as it does whenever a big group puts its massive shoulders to the wheel and forges ahead.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country		Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.668	9.5631
Austri	100	As Sch	59.6321	59.001
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.5801	26.3814
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.4552	41.1454
Canada	1	Can $	8.1760	8.0900
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.5970	12.0066
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4767	1.4597
Hong Kong	1	Hk $	1.5138	1.4982
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4318	1.4211
Iran	100	Rial	11.8635	11.7749
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7203	0.7124
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.3034	4.2543
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7850	0.7791
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.3313	34.0748
Malaysia	1	Ml $	4.4108	4.3628
Mauritious	1	Rupee	0.9106	0.9038
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7568	0.7511
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.7814	3.7416
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7774	0.7716
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8390	4.7857
Spain	100	Sp Pt.	7.7330	7.6594
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4862	0.4329
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3577	1.3431
Swetzerland	1	Sw Frc	5.0270	4.9668
Tanzania	1	T Sch.	1.0415	1.0337
Thailand	100	Baht	43.6962	43.3011
UK	1	Pound	15.3374	15.1987
USA	1	US $	10.0050	9.8675
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7201	2.6990
USSR	1	Rouble	13.8400	13.7373
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1808	4.1357

These rates were supplied by the Bank of Tokyo. Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on February 22, 1983.

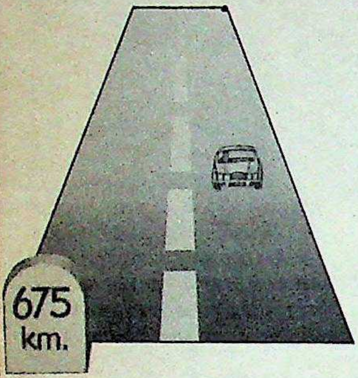
ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index* February 18, 1983	254.2	2.0
Cereals	266.8	7.8
Chemicals	353.6	nil
Industrial Fibres	173.7	3.4
Metals	345.1	1.0
Sugar	189.0	8.4
Textile Yarns	218.5	(0.7)
Vegetable Oils	302.2	(3.6)
Gold, standard, February 18, 1983 (Rs/10 gm	1,775.00	(5.00)
Silver, .999 February 18, 1983 . (Rs/kg)	3,290.00	15.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index* February 17, 1983	237.4	(3.6)
Cement	228.6	(5.1)
Chemicals	205.2	(9.5)
Engineering	392.8	(5.3)
Fertilisers	205.2	(2.4)
Man-made fibres	376.9	(21.7)
Paper	468.8	(0.7)
Rubber Goods	159.5	(0.2)

MONEY	per cent
Money Supply, January 14, 1983	2.0
Bank Deposits	2.1
Foreign Exchange Assets	5.0

* 1969–70 = 100

How to save wear and tear on long distances



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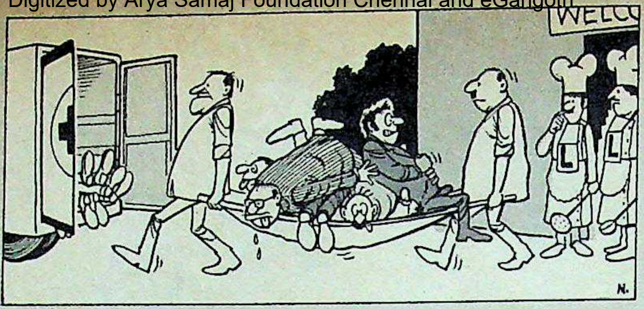
FAILED!

■ Too many cooks can spoil the broth. And when most of them are earnest beginners, eager to show off their skill with the *masala*, the fat can really be in the fire, as happened in Chandigarh last month.

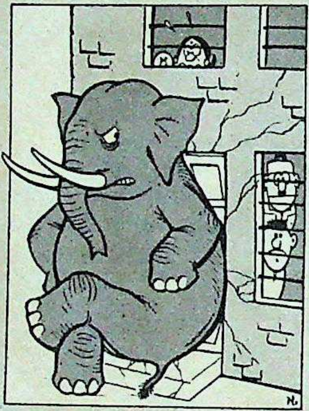
A local foodcrafts institute, at the end of a session, laid on a lavish dinner for scores of people. As a heavenly aroma wafted upwards in the cold winter night, the chairman of the board of directors of the institute made a short speech and declared the feast open. The principal of the institute made another, shorter speech, in which he said that more than 75 dishes had been served to show to the general public and the ca ing industry in particular culinary skill of the trai Then everybody fell to it.



The principal must h eaten his own words, becau some time after hungry ja closed on the *puris* and t *mattar paneer*, increasi numbers of diners star groaning and writhing w pain. Over 70 of these glutto were carted into ambulanc and rushed to hospital. As o of them said: "*Dal mein ku kala tha.*"

GANESAN'S REVENGE

■ Elephants don't forget, but a police constable and a young man in Villacherry, near Madurai in Tamil Nadu, are wishing that Ganesan would. Ganesan is a handsome 12-year-old tusker whom some would call proud. When a tipsy young man made rude noises at him last month, he trumpeted angrily and chased his tormentor all over town. His quarry dived into the constable's house for shelter, and then both man and constable sat at the window telling each other stories, keeping a most uneasy eye on Ganesan squatting on guard outside.



Finally, the young man slipped out through the back door. A little later, the elephant's mahout came up, calmed his charge and took him away. The constable, however, was scared stiff. The next day, he made a formal complaint to the police sayi that he feared that Ganes would attack his hou thinking it was the house the youth.

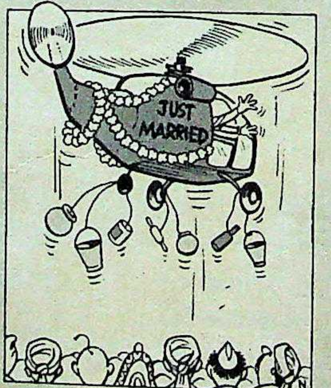
Meanwhile, the pol tried to get the youth to of fruits to Ganesan and ma peace. The youth—who h been arrested for creating "nuisance"—told them th he wasn't going anywh near the animal. Everybody now waiting for Ganesa next move.

HAPPY LANDING

■ Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a bridegroom. That was what hundreds of spectators said in Nibali, near Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh, as the shehnai wailed its welcome to a wedding.

Last month, a wedding party left Delhi for the village in two buses and about 40 cars. In the ordinary course of things, the bridegroom, too, would have made the trip in a car, but this young man had flair. He got into a helicopter, *sehra*, sword, and all, and made the trip in great style, with nary a spot of dust on his gleaming sherwani nor a hair out of place.

The village is about 5 km from the highway and, like most villages in India, did not boast of a helipad. However, one was quickly constructed the night before the bridegroom breezed in: the vill gers must have thought th the prime minister was comi to make a speech.

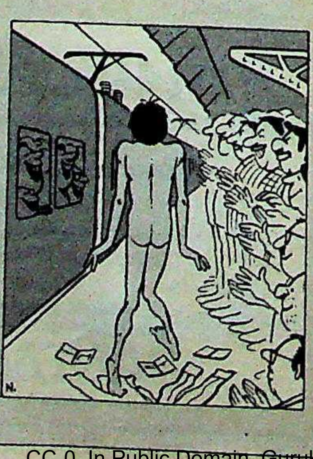


After the happy cou had done their marath around the fire, the helicop showed its paces again at th reception showering flow and benedictions on the ch ring crowd gathered th This, certainly, is one m riage that has got off to flying start.

STRIP TEASE

■ Popular justice, swift and rough, has its points. A pickpocket in Bombay used to 'work' the local trains between Churchgate and Dadar stations. For a long time he got away with it, but one afternoon came the reckoning. He found his sly hand grabbed and himself pinioned by several brawny arms.

The passengers were really angry and a suggestion that their prey be turned over to the police was quickly rejected. In fact, voice vote decreed that he be soundly beaten up. But one innovative voice from the back of the coach said that the man be stripped naked and paraded.



This appealed to everybody and willing hands made easy work of the trembling man's clothes. In less time than it takes to tell, he looked like something out of *Play* When Mahalaxmi stat arrived, he was pushed o onto the platform and fr marched up and down wh gleeful commuters clapp About 10 minutes of this w enough to reduce him to je Upon which his captors sc ped him up, ordered him dress, and handed a pickp ket in a state of *deshab* over to the police.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DU

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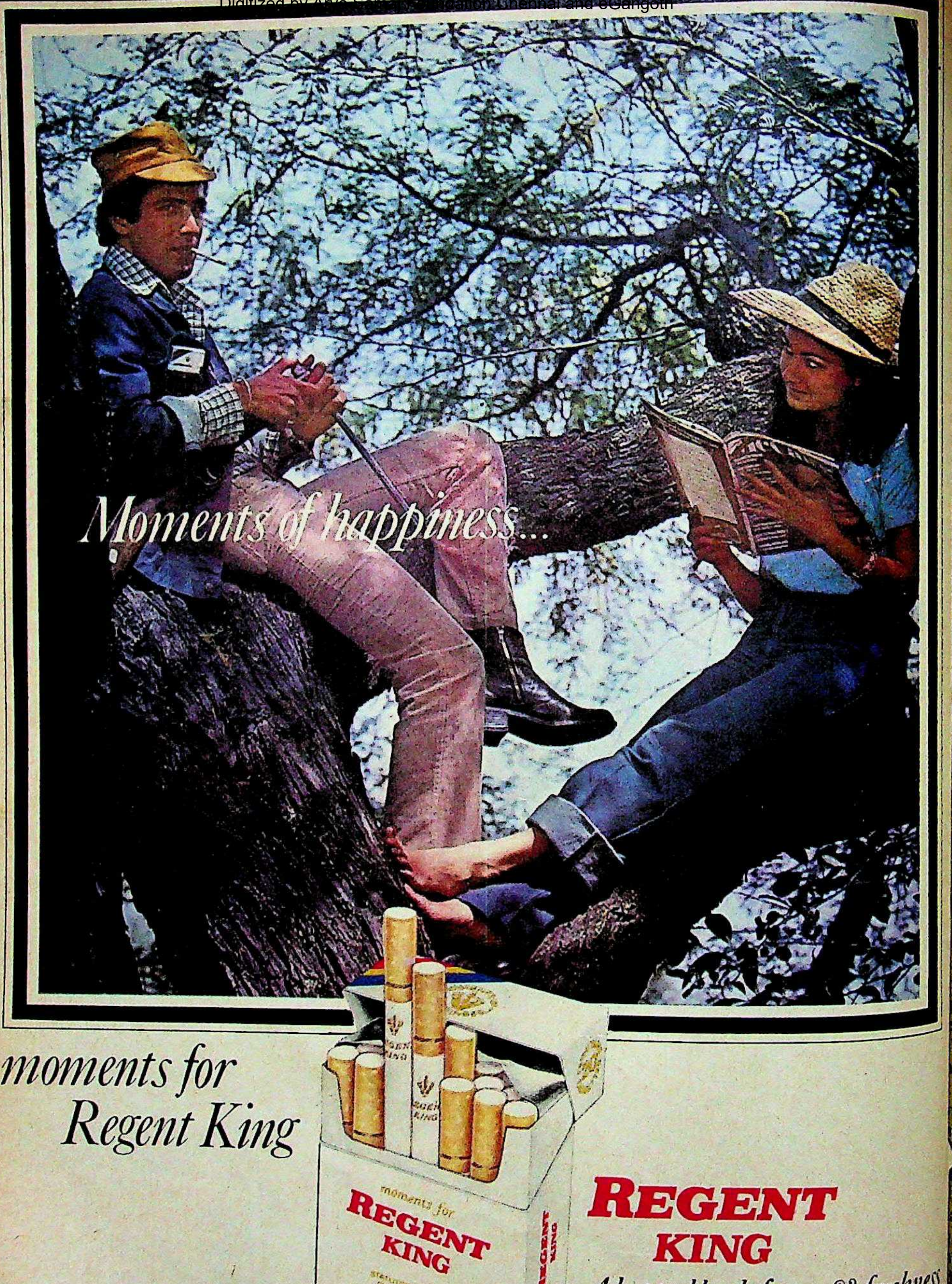
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NDHRA PRADESH

A Novel Judgement

A LANDMARK judgement delivered recently could open the floodgates for a deluge of plagiarism suits nst film makers. Till now, both Hindi regional films have shamelessly plagia- plots from other films and novels out any legal action being taken. But hakrishna Rao, 50, chief justice of the erabad City Civil Court had other ideas. anuary 31, he fined well-known woman er I.K. Ramlakshmi, 52, popular film ctor Dasari Narayana Rao, 36, and four rs, the sum of Rs 50,000, to be paid to the nist writer, Ranganayakamma, 43, as ages for plagiarising her novel *Idena yam* which, ironically enough, translates This is my justice'.

The judge charged them pirating the novel to make Telugu box-office hit *Gorin-* and the Hindi film *Mehan- ang Layegi*. He also ordered the two films be stopped n being screened.

Clear Verdict: In his 70- judgement, the judge com- d the story, the sequence of ents and the dialogue of a *Nyayam* with those of the *Gorintaku* and another l *Raavudu* on which the script was allegedly based. proved conclusively that it a blatant case of plagia- *Raavadu*, as Ramlakshmi ned, is an unpublished l on which the film script based and for which she paid Rs 3,600.

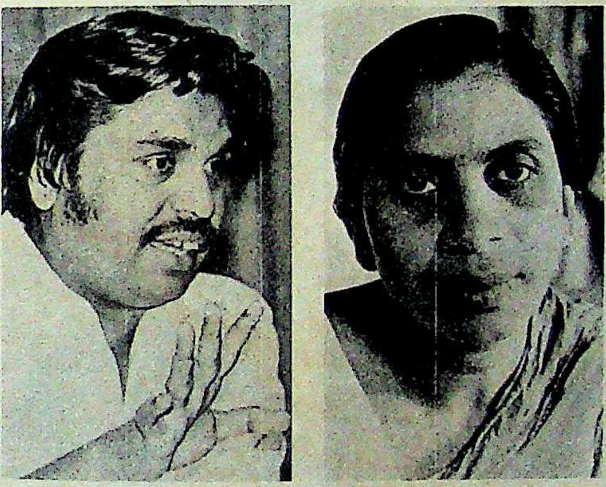
The judgement, however, accused yana Rao of being "the brains behind iracy and he made Ramlakshmi and the s party to the piracy for making the . He also declared that 'it is collusion her (Ramlakshmi) and the producers Narayana Rao brought the novel *udu* into existence subsequently to antiate their case".

Ranganayakamma's novel, published 68, is a standard pot-boiler which fits y into the formula for films made in a. Not surprisingly, the film made by was a runaway success and ran for more 100 days at many theatres in Andhra esh. The similarities between the film her novel were brought to Ranganaya- ma's notice in 1980, when she filed the against Narayana Rao. Remarked e Rao, who read both novels thrice and saw both films: "For such a reputed director and story writer it is not very difficult to change some characters and give it a colour of reality by treating it differently."

Mixed Response: On the heels of judgement, shock waves went through literary and film industry circles. Most people are surprised that a successful director like Narayana Rao, with 63 films under his belt, and Ramlakshmi, who has published 35 books and has won the Sahitya Akademi Award, could be involved in something of this nature. Both of them say that they are planning to appeal to the High Court.

But already there are signs that film producers and directors are jittery about the prospect of similar cases being brought against them. Says one Telugu film producer: "It lays us wide open for any writer who finds the slightest similarity between a published work and a film." But the writers all clearly support the judgement. Says Vasireddi Seetha Devi, another well-known woman writer: "It will serve as a lesson to those unscrupulous elements in the film world who do not pay anything for pirating other people's works." One of her fellow scribes adds: "Such judgements provide protection to a writer. Narayana Rao's film was by and large a copy of Ranganayakamma's story except that the profession of the hero was changed from a lawyer to a doctor."

And, even if the High Court appeal proves successful, it is obvious that a legal merry-go-round has been set in motion in Andhra Pradesh that could have major repercussions as far as the Bombay film world is concerned.



Narayana Rao (left) and Ranganayakamma: blatant plagiarism

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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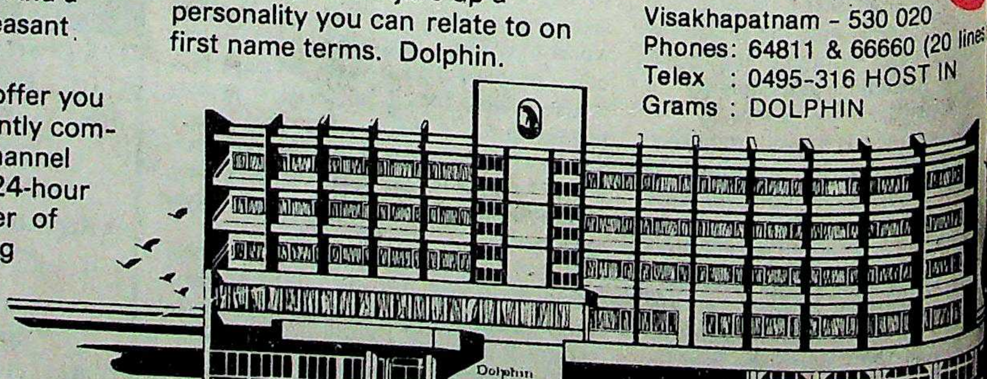

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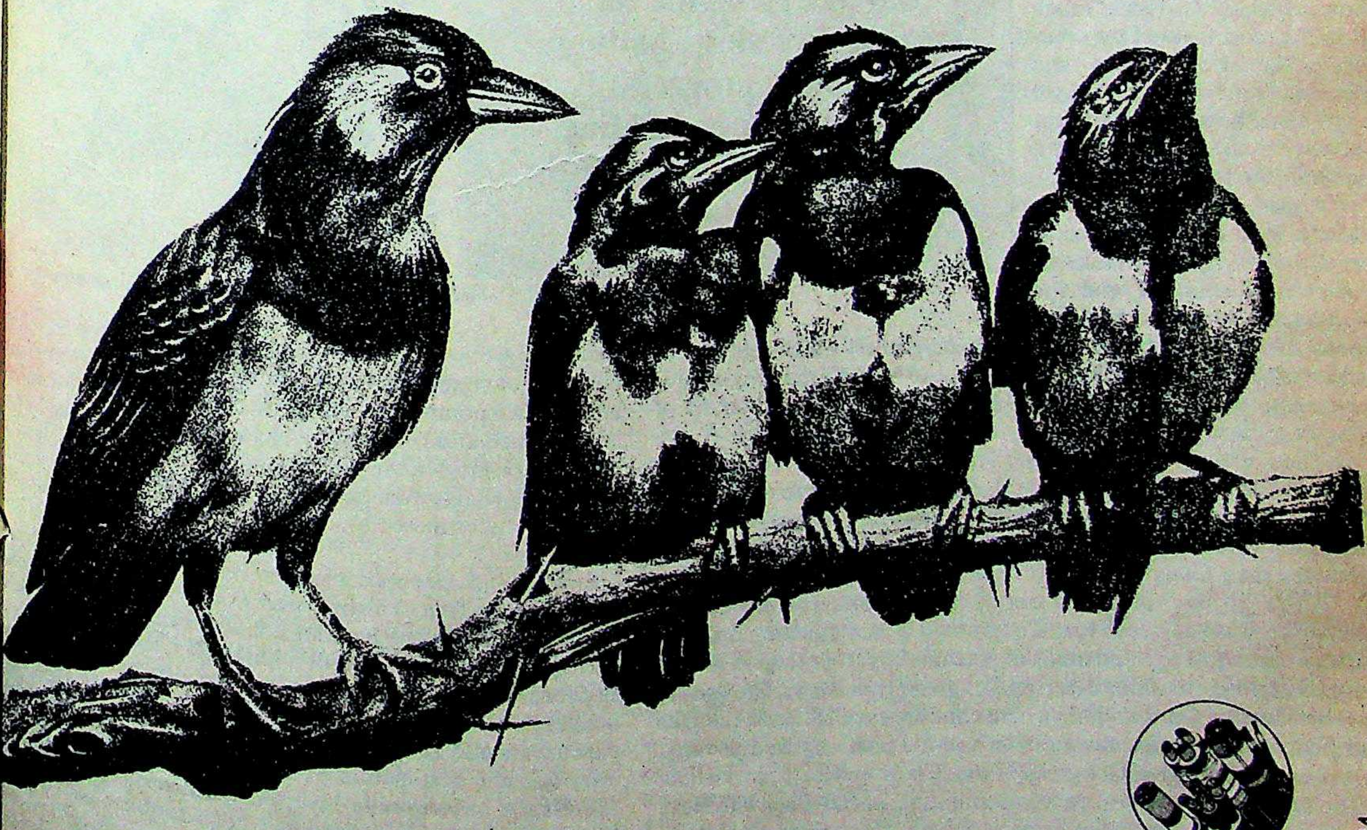

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THE SOUTH

The New Politics

TWO MONTHS have passed since the ruling Congress(I) "died" in the south. One may ask, Hamlet-like, "die two months ago, and not forgotten yet?" Congress(I) is not only *not* forgotten, it is hopeful of a come-back, 1980-wise, as and when the electoral tide turns against the Janata in Karnataka and Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh. The Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns are very much alive. In Karnataka, Gundu Rao, though vanquished, is not crushed. He has a rugged stubbornness about him and opposed Buta Singh's bid to win over Bangarappa in the gray hours between the Congress(I) defeat and the formation of the Janata Government headed by Ramakrishna Hegde.

Gundu Rao has also refused to give H.C. Srikantiah a written assurance that if the latter could wean away an adequate number of MLA's from the ruling party, which, in effect, is a coalition of Janata and Kranti Ranga, Gundu Rao would make him chief minister. Not very long ago this man brought 100 MLA's from the Janata to the Congress(I). Gundu Rao evidently hopes that Dame Fortune will smile on him again if he could only perform penance by remaining in the wilderness for a year or two. Isn't that how Madam returned to the summit in January 1980? And isn't Gundu Rao the most loyal of the courtiers like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? He is said to have made it clear to the prime minister that he doesn't want a berth in the Central Cabinet.

There is a strong sentiment throughout the south that the Hindi states have muddled up Indian politics and are to blame for the nation's slow, halting economic progress. But southern cooperation will not be easy to build.

Uphill Task: Whether Gundu Rao or anyone else of the Congress(I) can return to power in Karnataka and the party can recapture political power in Andhra Pradesh would depend entirely on the success or failure of the two chief ministers, Hegde and N.T. Rama Rao, to give their respective states the taste of better government and an air of New Politics.

The task is more difficult for Hegde than Rama Rao because, unlike in Andhra Pradesh, there was no giant rebellion of the electorate against Congress(I) in Karnataka in January. Indeed, the Janata-Kranti Ranga coalition mustered a smaller percentage of the votes than Congress(I).

Although the voting did not yield clear patterns of electoral behaviour, it was evident that Congress(I) won majorities in the relatively backward dryland areas of Karnataka rather than in the developed regions. Muslims deserted Congress(I) *en masse*, Harijans in sizeable chunks. On the whole where conditions of life have changed and people have broken away from age-old passivity and poverty, the voters have rejected Congress(I) which is now clearly marked out as the party that thrives on economic and social backwardness. Hence its ability to mobilise large numbers of voters in the Hindi-speaking states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

But the fact that people who have enjoyed fruits of ment—in small or medium or large slices—have put Janata makes the task of Ramakrishna Hegde more, not less, diff his supporters will expect rewards which the new Govern deliver in order to remain in power. These rewards need not ly in terms of economic gains; in fact, with all his administra political acumen and his small but not invisible personal Ramakrishna Hegde just cannot deliver economic benefits tions of people in Karnataka except over a reasonably long time. What is more important therefore is that he gives uplifting feel of New Politics: clean, honest government, ideology of social justice and active mass participation in the and administrative process.

MUSHTAQ AHMED

Hegde: astute political manoeuvres

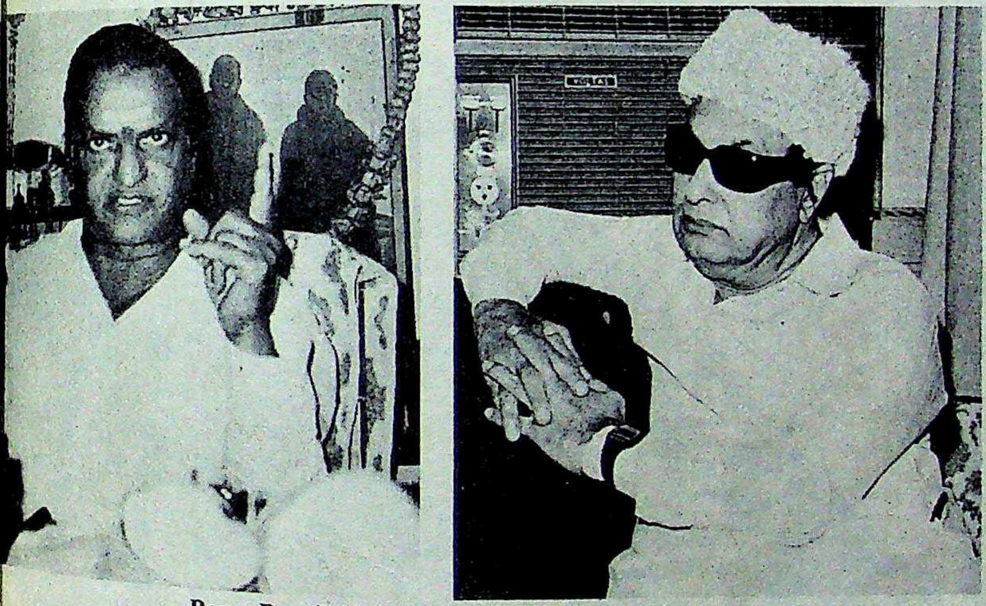
Distinct Goals: Hegde is not unaware of the challenge During his first trip to New Delhi as chief minister of Karn met small groups of intellectuals as much to articulate his st concepts of change as to glean creative and constructive stressed two points more than others: good, honest govern mass participation. The first objective he would pursue by ting arbitrariness in the posting and transfer of officials, in in the day-to-day functioning of the Government and c which has taken incredibly wide and deep roots in the Kan *politik*.

To gain the second objective, Hegde said he would d the administration. The first step would be to hold electi zilla parishads on the basis of political parties, lowering t age to 18. Later, but without a long delay, there would be elections to panchayats and other local bodies. Substan tional powers and appropriate funds are to be made avail panchayats and zilla parishads, which will be protected fr trary corrupt intervention by politicians.

Hegde has virtually reversed the caste-class politic Devraj Urs had set in motion with considerable success. In plex mosaic of castes in Karnataka, the two major up —Lingayats and Vokkaligas—constitute about 40 per c tion and own about that percentage points of land. These two had dominated Karnataka (or Mysore state) politics since the Devraj Urs had dislodged them from political power in 1978, ng them by a coalition of the minority castes and communi- rs' dictum was: the minorities put together constitute a majo-

he Janata-Kranti Ranga combine was returned to power with rt drawn from all important castes including Harijans as well slims. Hegde therefore has put together a council of ministers nting and balancing diverse castes and communities. Forty nt of the ministers belong to the Lingayat and Vokkaliga 60 per cent to the others.

THE event Hegde is riding too many horses. He has no other ice. His party does not have a stable majority in the Legislative sembly. Its comfortable majority of 132 members in a House depends on the support of 18 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) eight communists and 14 independents. Hegde, however, is an and experienced political actor who plays his role with nimble that are seldom abrasive. He has skilfully isolated S. rappa.



Rama Rao (left) and MGR: differing stands

angarappa's first sin was his openness to the crude moves of ingh immediately after the poll results came to be known. He consumed by the desire to head the new government of taka that he misread the mood of the electors. A source close de remarked wryly, "If Bangarappa makes another move to the Janata Government, it will be a grim confrontation bet- im and the people."

his first two months Hegde has not unfolded a political design nataka which has the promise of New Politics. His emphasis o be on the government machinery and a series of populist res. With these he hopes to plant his Janata regime firmly in the Karnataka. One of the first actions he took was to bring to- a 12-member council of economic and administrative experts will make periodical assessment of plan programmes and sug- cessary changes in policies.

e vice-chairman of the council is G.V.K. Rao who was at one ief secretary in Karnataka when Devraj Urs was chief minis- d who later became a member of the Planning Commission in elhi. The council has already started reviewing Centre-state ns in the field of finance, administration and allied subjects.

Its most important brief is to devise ways and means to strengthen the federal structure so that a more harmonious and equal relationship could be established between New Delhi and Bangalore. The chief minister intends to involve experts outside his state, particularly in New Delhi, in several studies relating to the federal structure and other important political issues as they come up from time to time.

Southern Initiative: Following Hegde's meeting with Rama Rao in Hyderabad, the concept of 'South-South' cooperation is fast gaining ground in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. *The Hindu* has given strong support to Hegde's initiative to bring the five southern states together. Even if the five chief ministers can coordinate their strategies to face the Y.B. Chavan Finance Commission, it will be a significant step to change Centre-state relations by indirect means.

Hegde maintains that the southern states will not "gang up" against the north. But there is a strong sentiment throughout the south that the Hindi states have muddled up Indian politics and are to blame for the nation's slow, halting economic progress. But at the same time southern cooperation will not be all that easy to build.

One reason is that the three non-Congress(I) Governments stand upon different social bases and do not seem to share the same political views. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Telugu Desam are two local parties misnamed "regional". The Janata Party, on the other hand, is a "national" party. But those who believe that the Janata Party may derive a renewal at the national level from the success of Ramakrishna Hegde's Government are clinging to an illusion. The Janata experiment in Karnataka is hardly replicable in another state, not to speak of the national level. What broke up at the Centre in the summer of 1979 cannot be brought back in any of the Hindi-speaking states in the north. Even in Orissa it is doubtful if the new Janata Party created by a merger of Janata and a Lok Dal faction could capture power at the next poll without bringing together other opposition groups.

The Hegde Ministry, therefore, is a product of the political cross-currents in Karnataka since 1978. Its stability for a whole electoral period of five years can be ensured only by creating a new political climate in the state: a New Politics of vision, values and verve. In the absence of New Politics, it may succumb to pressures of its inherent contradictions. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are lying in wait. They are far from dead.

To cripple them permanently in Karnataka, the battered Congress(I) fortress must crumble in at least one more major state. "Let's keep a close watch on Maharashtra," observed a leading figure in Hegde's constellation. "The Marathas may decide to go their own way in 1985, now that Vasant Dada Patil is back to the gaddi." He pointed to the Congress(I) debacle in the four districts of Bombay-Karnataka: Dharwar, Belgaum, Bijapur and North Kanara. The Congress(I) won only 26 of the 57 seats in this Marathi-speaking region, the lowest to date. But in terms of votes, it was just 1 per cent less than those of all non-Congress(I) parties together.

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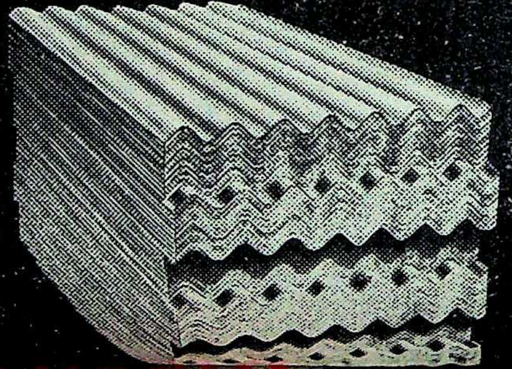

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PLASTIC SURGERY

Bombay Breakthrough

FEW DEVELOPMENTS in the Indian surgical scene have been heralded with as much fanfare by the medical fraternity. Last month in Bombay Dr Ravin L. Thatte, 44, associate professor of plastic and reconstructive surgery at Bombay's Sion Hospital, was still receiving letters and accolades from all over the world for his pioneering work on skin flaps for achieving bone cover after accidents and "muscle mobilisation" to cure congenital cleft lips.

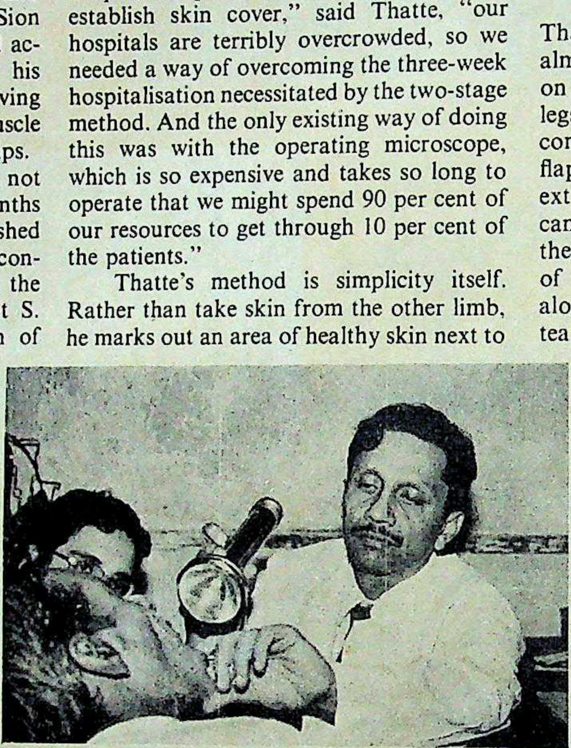
Institutional recognition too was not long in coming. By end 1982, only months after news of his advancement was published in leading journals of plastic and reconstructive surgery, Thatte was awarded the prestigious Rs 10,000 Hari Om Prerit S. Rangachari award of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI). Said Dr J.C.N. Joshipura, a leading orthopaedic surgeon in Bombay: "Ravin Thatte's contribution to surgery is extremely significant, particularly when you consider our high accident rate. With his method of skin cover for compound fractures the recovery time, expenses, and hospitalisation are all cut down and the patient can be up and about much faster."

Thatte's "one-stage random pattern de-epithelialised turnover flap" and "radical muscle mobilisation in the surgical repair of unilateral cleft lip" are both simple, and yet extremely effective improvements on traditional methods, cutting operating time and patient recovery period sharply and preventing to a great extent the subsidiary traumas and muscle damage associated with techniques currently in use.

Tedious Process: Skin flaps are commonly used in compound fractures and severe bone damage which has resulted in punched-out craters which leave the bones and joints uncovered. Since bones cannot heal without proper skin cover, and would remain open to infection and deterioration otherwise, plastic surgery is used to transplant healthy skin onto the crater. With the traditional two-stage method of transplantation, however, a flap of skin still rooted to the healthy limb was sutured onto the wound on the injured limb which made it necessary for the limbs to be tied together for three weeks before the skin can take new root and establish a fresh blood supply from the injured limb. At the end of this period, another incision was made to separate the limbs, resulting in further pain and hospitalisation for the patient. To make matters worse, after being tied together and immobilised for three weeks, both limbs required intensive physiotherapy.

"The problem, as I saw it, was to find a simple, inexpensive, one-stage method to establish skin cover," said Thatte, "our hospitals are terribly overcrowded, so we needed a way of overcoming the three-week hospitalisation necessitated by the two-stage method. And the only existing way of doing this was with the operating microscope, which is so expensive and takes so long to operate that we might spend 90 per cent of our resources to get through 10 per cent of the patients."

Thatte's method is simplicity itself. Rather than take skin from the other limb, he marks out an area of healthy skin next to the wound. After removing the epithelium, or outer covering of the skin, the inner skin tissue is flipped over to cover the wound, while one edge is left attached to the body to ensure blood supply. The epithelium is then restored over the inverted skin tissue and, once the sutures heal, the skin is as good as new.



Thatte examining a patient: significant contribution

The one-stage method thus does away with the need for joining limbs and later cutting them apart, saving accident victims from both the pain and expense while allowing them to resume work much earlier Explained the plastic surgeon: "In effect we have cut out the four-hour operating time, with a 40-minute operation which is almost an out patient affair—and the patient can now go home the next day."

Simple Method: The existing one-stage flap transplant which is done with an operating microscope, while proven effective, is somewhat inappropriate under Indian conditions since the microscope costs over Rs 2 lakh and the operation can be done only in the most sophisticated operating theatres.

By contrast, Thatte's method need surgical knife, forceps and a pair of and, boasts the surgeon, could performed in the middle of a crow roughfare. Said Dr Noshir Antia, ent Bombay plastic surgeon famo pioneering work on leprosy victim method is an excellent idea, a break in surgery. It is generally simple such as this that are the most effe

Since he first developed the Thatte's team of surgeons have almost 55 similar operations, many on complex areas like the fingers legs. Almost all the operations h completely successful, and the rate flaps using the one-stage turnover extremely low. Post surgery com can arise, and in a few cases Thatte the formation of small cysts due to of unremoved epithelium being along with the skin. But the Sion team has found this to be a min plication, since the cysts ca oved very easily at a later st

Another surgical break by Thatte, though not of consequence as the turnove the use of "muscle mobilis reconstructing a cleft lip. A plastic surgeon has used the and least harmful method: ing the traditional technique across the entire lip and into its proper place, Thatte ed a technique which cuts upper skin and allows the inn to fall into place of its ow The final result is a scar wh shows, and a cupid's arch w completely natural.

Meanwhile, Thatte's work o nover flap has earned him incr cognition abroad. Documented in the *British Journal Of Plastic Su* described in some detail in *Wats* *Orthopaedics*, a major reference turnover flap has been recognised ficant new technique in curing a litating accident victims. *The En* *Of Flaps*, a specialist publication surgeons which will shortly be r New York's Little, Brown and Co fact, places Thatte's one-stage tur among a select list of "the m recommended flaps—tried and the plastic surgeon, who uses all can spare from the operating table on environmental issues, the re not something to be shrugged destly. "Plastic surgery is a field are contributions every decade "mine is only a small advance consider that it is a growing fiel

—KETAKI SHETH and CHANDER

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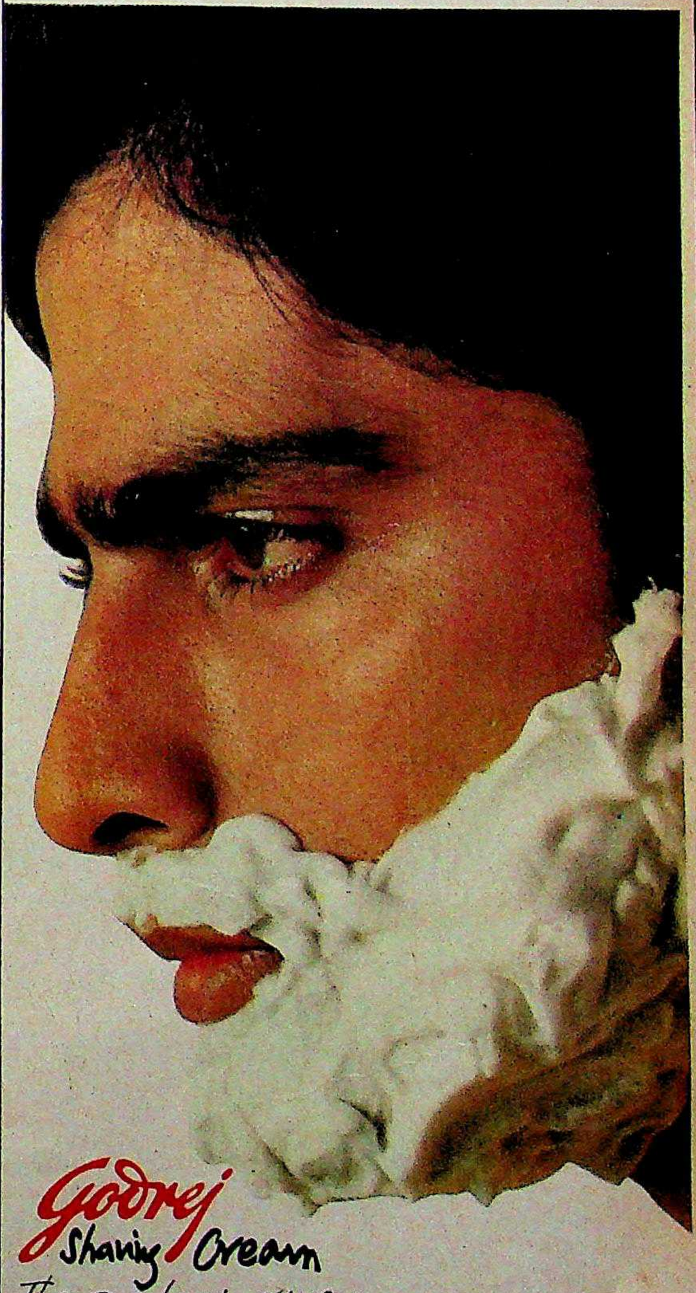
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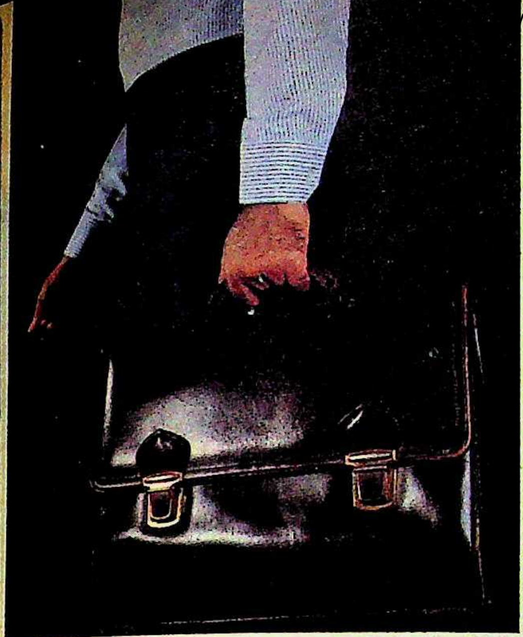

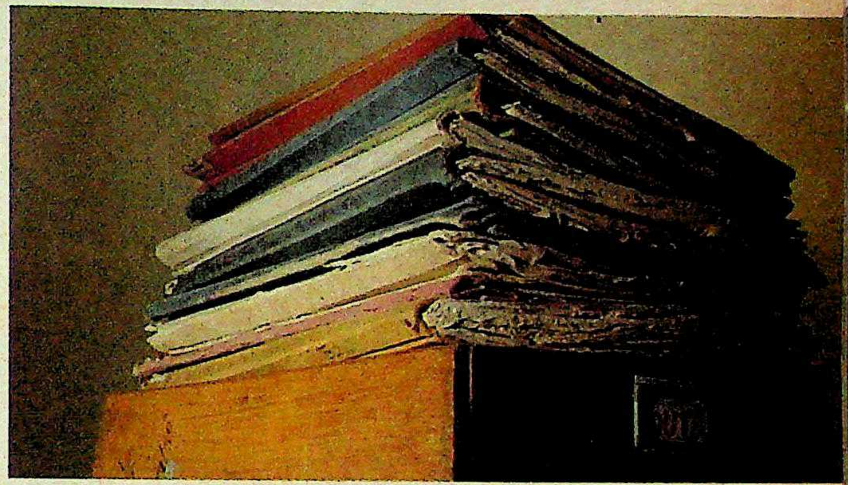

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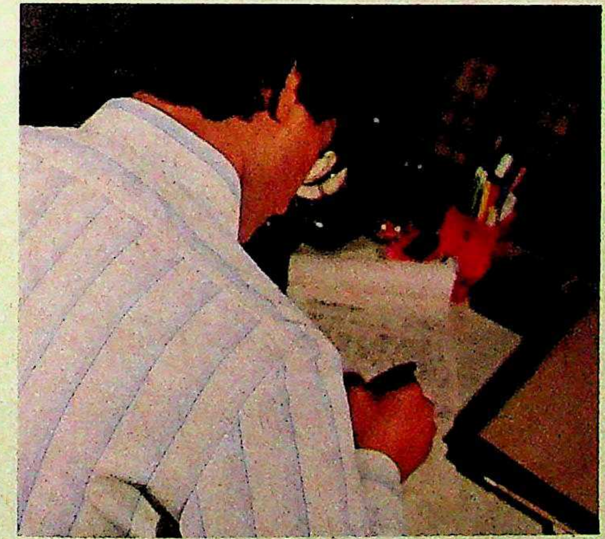

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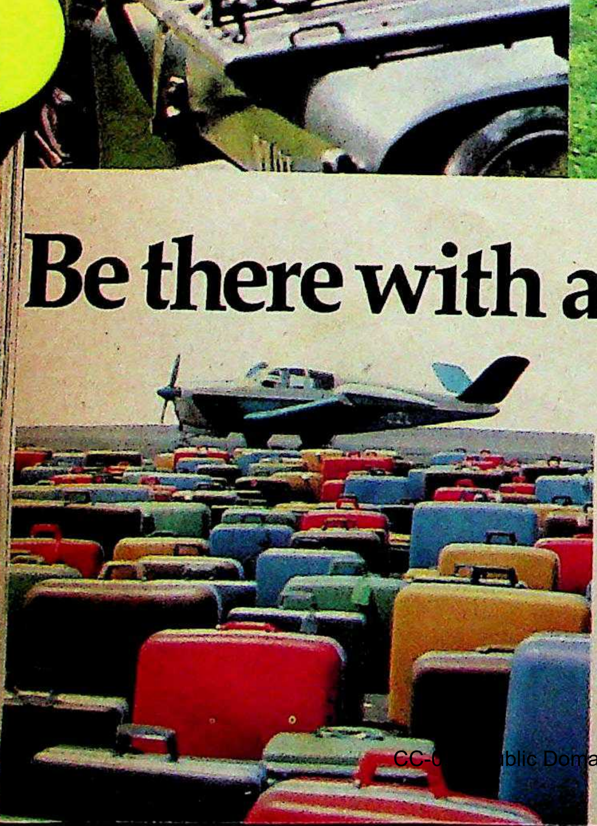

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nauthorised Opulence

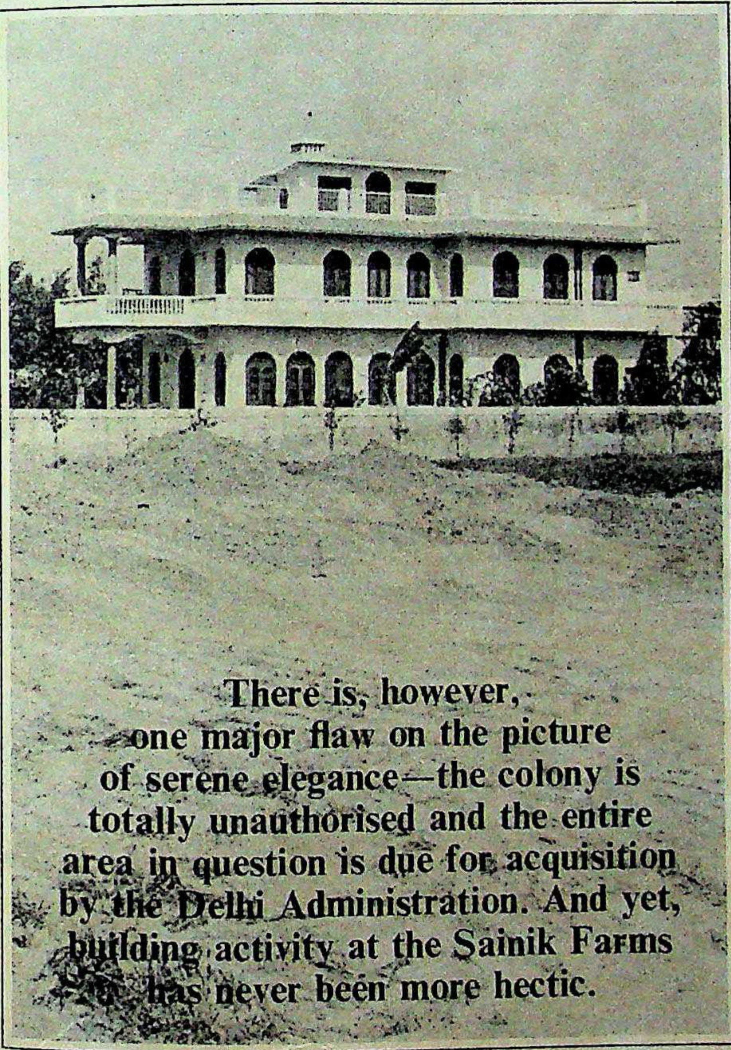
WHICH is the most exclusive colony in the capital? For the present moment anyway, Delhi's most sought-after piece of real known as Sainik Farms, some 15 es south of the city's centre and po- by an assortment of VIPs ensconced rre patchwork of architectural offer- itation Spanish villas rub shoulders lifornia-style split-level houses. A massive storey building resemb- better-class hill station uggles up to one that es a luxury liner. One -conscious resident es of barbed wire on its nd floodlights on the nother bristles with 15 ditioners, one for every Manicured lawns, swim- ools and orchid hot- are fairly common ap- es. to a number of the uses.

ere is, however, one flaw on the picture of elegance—the colony is unauthorised and the ea in question is due for ion by the Delhi Admi- on. A notification under 4 of the Land Acqui- ct had been issued as far November, 1980. And ilding activity at the Farms has never been ectic and houses are lite- pringing up overnight, ore grandiose than the

inik Farms, in fact re- s what must rank as the land scandal in the capi- art from the land being notification for acquisi- en more extraordinary is that in the last three ot a single building plan has been by the Delhi Municipal Corporation. the massive structures constantly ating completely unauthorised. Since year particularly, building activity at nik Farms is booming. Construction oes on in broad daylight and no one ed to the occasional notices sent by poration asking the owners to demo- ir houses.

t another peculiarity about the 'farming' complex is that there are no signs of any agriculture or animal husbandry in the newer plots. In fact a few of the farms actually double as factories, mainly of the garment export variety as testified by rows of freshly dyed garments drying on the clotheslines. An American visitor remarked after driving through the area: "You must be making a fat profit out of agriculture in this country. I would associate such farm houses with Dallas, Texas, rather than New Delhi, India." She, like many others in the capital, was not aware of the untouchability that hovers over the area.

PICTURES BY HARI OM GULATI



There is, however, one major flaw on the picture of serene elegance—the colony is totally unauthorised and the entire area in question is due for acquisition by the Delhi Administration. And yet, building activity at the Sainik Farms has never been more hectic.

Normally, when an area comes under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, the price of the land automatically tumbles since this signifies that the Government plans to take over the land for public purposes and later intends to impose Section 6 for their formal acquisition. At the time of notification under Section 4, the price gets pegged and the collector inquires into the value of the land and everything on it up to that date. No compensation is paid by the Government for any structures built after this, which are at the owner's peril. While in some of the lands notified under Section 4, the owners have gone to the high court and stayed the Delhi Administration from imposing Section 6, this has in no way changed the validity of Section 4. And the municipal corporation in any case cannot pass plans of houses built on such land, quite apart from the fact that a majority of the building plans do not meet the specifications of what officially constitutes a farm house.

Abnormal Trend: Contrary to the normal land price laws, the land price at the Sainik Farms after dipping for a few months following the imposition of Section 4 started climbing and has never stopped. In 1975, the average price of land in the area was Rs 40,000 an acre; in 1978, Rs 60,000 to Rs 70,000; in 1980, Rs 1.5 lakh and Rs 2 lakh. Today in parts it is well over Rs 5 lakh an acre. While the brokers' prices vary between Rs 3 lakh to 5 lakh depending on location, surprisingly none of the sale deeds are registered at more than Rs 1 lakh an acre.

Ironically, farm lands not under notification in other parts of Delhi such as Mehrauli are often lower in price. But in case the notification under Section 4 is lifted and the authorities decide to regularise all these unauthorised structures, the Sainik Farm owners will really land a bonanza. Just a kilometre away from them, in Saket, the land price is currently cround Rs 1,500 a square yard. At these rates, an acre of Sainik Farm land would work to out to Rs 72 lakh.

What makes the Sainik Farm residents so confident that their land is not going to be acquired despite the notification? "It is the people who live here," says a property dealer, adding that "the top people of Delhi live here. There are generals, railway board

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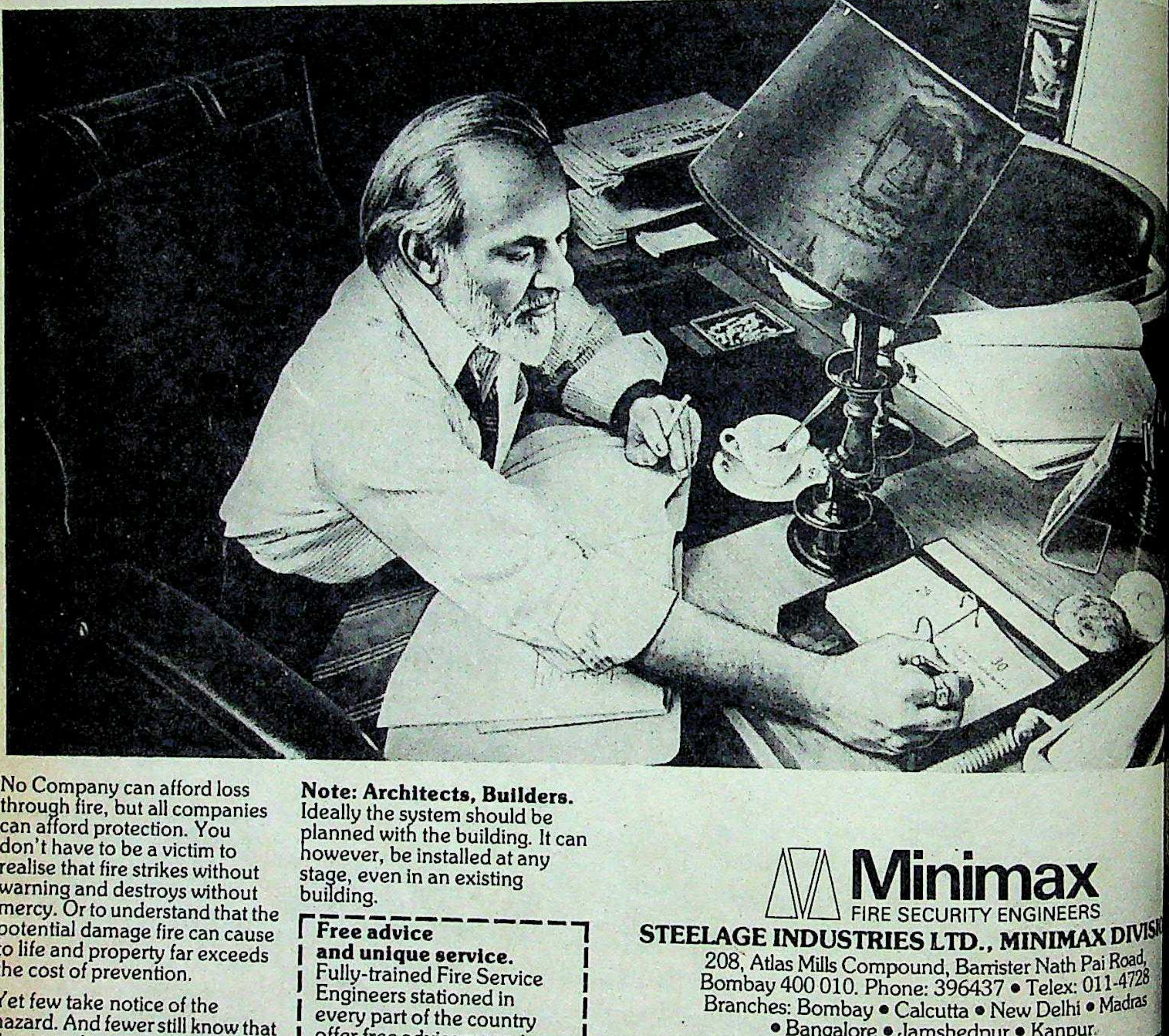

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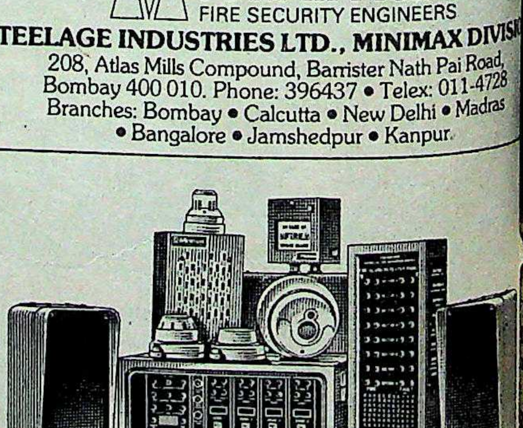

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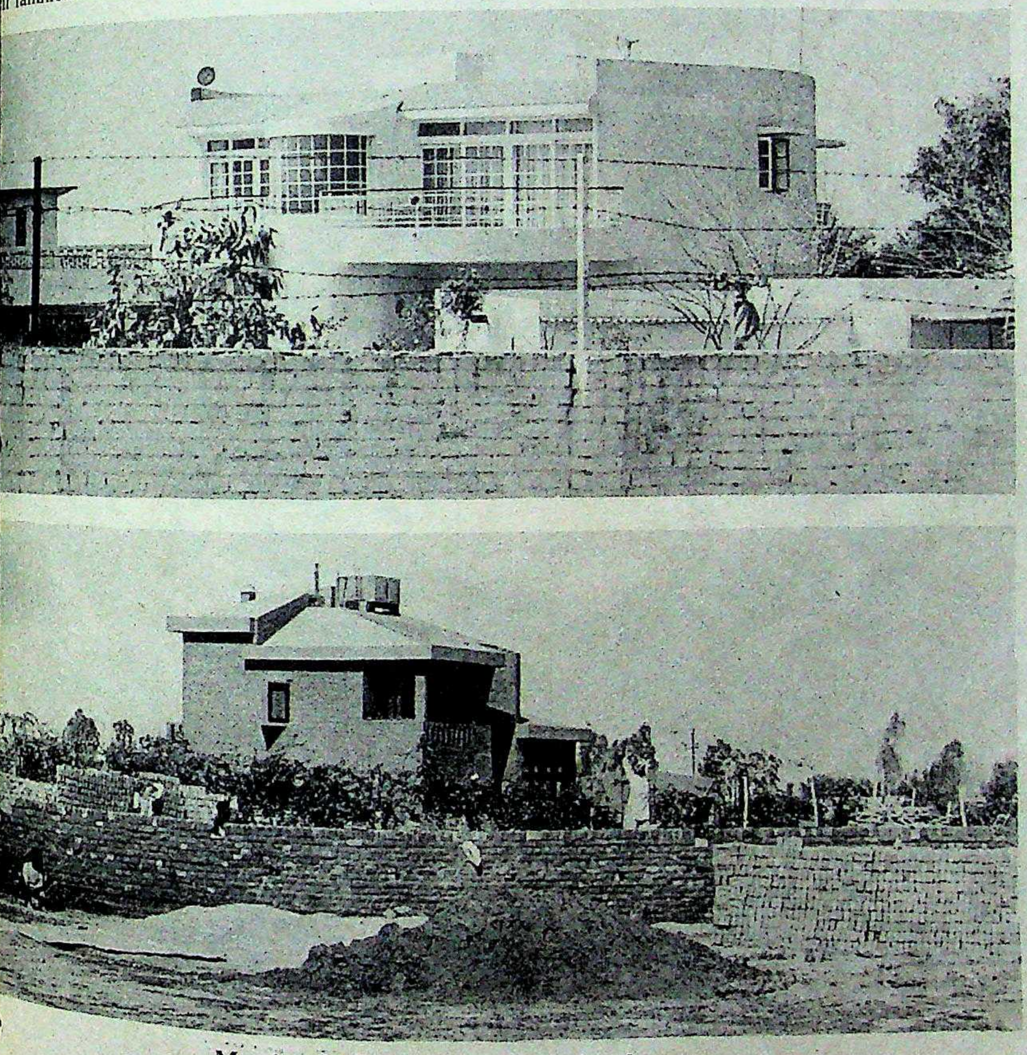
ers. and secretaries to the Govern- of India. Who would dare to bulldoze houses?" Word has certainly got d that the VIP residents ensure immu- om the usual consequences of building horised structures. "You just go ahead uy yourself some land," a policeman at arby Madangir Police Station advises. lleague launches into an account of the life-style of one of the garment expor- ho has built himself a farm which is the the neighbourhood. Many prominent have stayed out of the picture by pur- g plots in the name of other members ir families.



Mansions in Sainik Farms: exclusive elegance

he Delhi Sainik Co-operative House ing Society was started in 1961 as a e for defence personnel. Originally were just 161 acres and 102 farm plots. er the years, the Sainik Farm complex own and grown. Farmers of the sur- ing villages of Khanpur, Khidki and seeing the land prices shoot upwards, been happily selling off their land. are now over 500 acres in the Sainik Farm complex. The society charges each new farm owner Rs 6,000 as a fee for use of the roads and all names are listed on the society's board at the entrance to the farm complex. Colonel Kamal, secretary of the society, however denies that the new residents are part of the Sainik Society, though he agrees that they are all trying to take shelter under the umbrella of the original society. started in 1961.

Of the over 300 farms currently in existence, Kamal says he is concerned with only the 102 original members of the society, of whom only 19 have sold their plots. He adds: "These others have nothing to do with us. Unfortunately in the last year two categories have sprung up: the genuine farmers and those who are looking at the place as a property investment. You can see the difference in the type of houses being built. These people are building palaces whereas when we armymen first moved here the place was a wilderness and we lived in shacks." Kamal feels that there has to be a large amount of money around for people to invest such huge sums in land whose future is clearly very uncertain.

Two of the older residents who live in modest cottages surrounded by fruit trees and mustard fields agree that the newcomers have changed the look of the neighbourhood. Admitted Nandita Singh: "We are ourselves embarrassed by the ostentation." Very few of the new constructions fulfil the specifications for farmhouses laid down in the master plan. The plan specifications, which were revised recently by a special notification, state that for a farm between one and two hectares, the maximum built up area can be 100 square metres. For farms above two hectares, the permissible limit is 150 square metres. The farm has to be a single-storey structure up to a maximum height of six metres. At the Sainik Farms, there are several structures which are flouting these guide-lines and some that are more than three times this limit.

Ineffectual Orders: With the city's élite involved, officers in the Delhi Development Authority, Delhi Administration's Land and Building Department and the Municipal Corporation are hesitant to talk about the myriad irregularities. Each one passes the buck to someone else. A clerk in the Zonal Engineer (Buildings) Office, however, innocently admitted that according to the records 90 notices have been served on the farmhouses. "We served notices in 1975, 1979, 1982, and 1983," he says, looking up his records. However, the notices have had absolutely no effect at all on the farms owners who continue unperturbed with the construction work on their plots.

"There is one law for us and another for the big people in the town," says Ram Kishore of the nearby lower middle class Madangir colony. Delhi's Lt-Governor Jagmohan, who has been known for taking swift and sometimes ruthless action against illegal construction in the past, when asked by INDIA TODAY appeard ignorant of these illegal constructions, but said: "I will look into the Sainik Farms. If there are any new buildings over there they are illegal. The notifications under Section 4 still stands."

—COOMI KAPOOR

Thermax announce the birth of a 16-year old. Revotherm.

India's first reverse flue, smoke tube boiler. From THERMAX.

The need for Revotherm was perceived by THERMAX 16 years ago ... soon after they started manufacturing boilers. The reason why it took them 16 years to introduce Revotherm in India is that they were looking for a unique design and technology. Technology that would eliminate the inherent disadvantages in conventional smoke tube boiler designs.

Ultimately they found what they were looking for in the Ygnis reverse flue, smoke tube boiler. Ygnis of Switzerland (with 12 licensees abroad) are the world's leading manufacturers of these boilers and have more than 70,000 installations all over the world. Some of them in such prestigious places as Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Pan American Corporate Building.

Thermax have introduced Revotherm (manufactured in collaboration with Ygnis of Switzerland) because it is the ultimate in oil-gas combustion technology.

What's so Unique about Revotherm?

The principle of reverse flue, smoke tube design is new to India. In the reverse flue design, the flue gases have a longer stay time in the furnace, achieving total combustion and leaving no traces of unburnt carbon. The resulting high heat-release rate means a smaller furnace is adequate for the same job.

Similarly, the spiral gas agitators in the convective zone permit very high rates of heat transfer, which means for every square metre of heating area, there is more transfer of heat. This allows lesser number of tubes for the same duty.

All this put together simply means lower capital cost, less maintenance and a very compact boiler for the same capacity of steam generation.

With its 82% (GCV) efficiency, Revotherm joins the versatile range of other Thermax High-Efficiency Boilers, and introduces the phenomenally successful Ygnis concept of reverse flue in India.

It's never too late for a great idea or a great innovation. Revotherm has been worth waiting for.

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Conserving energy, preserving the environment.

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BABY FOODS

Code Of Misconduct

Hard sell advertising and publicity makes us victims of habits which are economically wasteful and wholly contrary to good health.
—Indira Gandhi on the marketing of baby foods, World Health Assembly, Geneva, May 1981.

TWENTY months after the World Health Organisation (WHO) passed with an overwhelming majority—118 votes for, only the US against—WHO's "International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes", infant formula food marketing in India remains unchanged with baby food sales growing as fast as ever. Although the WHO code was meant only as a minimum guide-line, as member nations were expected to formulate their own codes and legislate accordingly, the Indian Government has effectively stalled the issue for the present. Last November Secretary to the Ministry of Social Welfare Mir Nasrullah announced that legislation to prevent aggressive marketing practices was on the anvil, but another session of Parliament ended with no action on this front.

Manufacturers continue with aggressive promotion and formula sales are booming. Sales skyrocketed to 40,000 tonnes last year, a compounded annual growth of 20 per cent in tonnage and almost 40 per cent per year in value terms. In the first six months of the current financial year, the production of baby food at 23,100 tonnes was 18.5 per cent higher than in the comparable period last year. Directorate General of Technical Development (DGTD) statistics show that the growth rate was higher than that of any other food product and one of the highest in all of India's industries. The Government's attitude to baby foods is made abundantly clear by growth projections of the Planning Commission which sets increasingly high targets every year: that for 1982–83 at 45,000 tonnes, is 12.5 per cent higher than last year's production.

Double-faced Approach: India's approach to the baby food marketing issue has been characterised by double talk. The prime minister and a number of civil servants have lashed out at multinationals for unscrupulous marketing practices which create a wasteful need for useless or even harmful products, but back home pressures from baby food manufacturers have assured that no action is taken against the industry. Last May it won yet another round when 32 new licences were issued for manufacture of the controversial products.

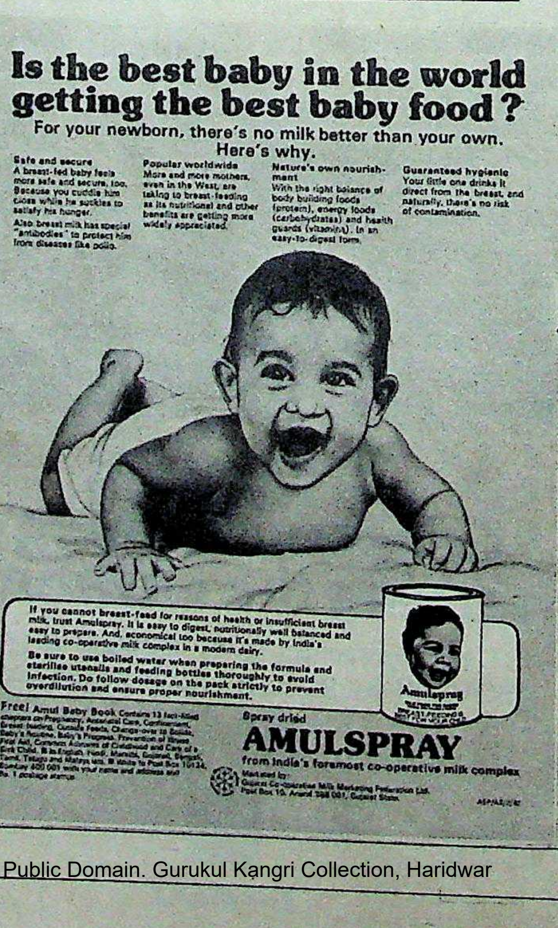
Ironically, this happened even as Dr S. Sidhu, secretary to the Ministry for Health and Family Welfare, proudly informed the 1982 World Health Assembly in Geneva of the stringent measures his Government proposed against "unscrupulous manufacturers" of infant formula and feed He stated that the "Indian draft at preserving breast-feeding in and arresting further inroads of infant foods in urban and areas."

Sidhu added that as India alr surplus baby food production 81,000 tonnes against 36,000 tonn produced in 1981—further increa city would be "carefully consid there was a genuine need for the of special types of infant foo Government's double standards compounded by the fact that of licences issued, seven are sector corporations, 10 atives which are heavily on government support, to private sector compa

Draft Code: The baby troversy dates back to ove of campaigns by outraged groups and voluntary a the end of which WHO fo draft code to restrict a marketing overkill by infa manufacturers. In Febr alarmed by widespread malnutrition and infant to the shift from breast bottle—India's infant mo is 120 per 1,000, compa than 20 in most develope and half this mortality is diarrhoeal diseases link cessation of breast-fe Indian Government form powered working group of health officials, baby facturers, voluntary org WHO and UNICEF, to for dia's own guide-lines. months of detailed study ing group submitted its Government.

The verdict: that eve code had too many looph effectively curb the harm in breast-feeding a legisla all forms of advertising tion of baby foods, fee and nipples would be ne ded in the recommend statutory notice on bab stating that "mother's for the baby", a ban on infants on cans, since misleadingly idealise the

Baby food manufacturers in India ignore both the spirit and letter of the WHO code and violate even the recommendations of the working group which they were party to.



Is the best baby in the world getting the best baby food?

For your newborn, there's no milk better than your own. Here's why.

Safe and secure A breast-fed baby feels more safe and secure, too. Because you cuddle him close while he suckles to satisfy his hunger. Also breast milk has special "antibodies" to protect him from diseases like polio.

Popular worldwide More and more mothers, even in the West, are taking to breast-feeding as its nutritional and other benefits are getting more widely appreciated.

Nature's own nourishment With the right balance of body building foods (protein), energy foods (carbohydrates) and health guards (vitamins). In an easy-to-digest form.

Guaranteed hygienic Your little one drinks it direct from the breast, and naturally, there's no risk of contamination.

If you cannot breast-feed for reasons of health or insufficient breast milk, trust Amulspray. It is easy to digest, nutritionally well balanced and easy to prepare. And, economical too because it's made by India's leading co-operative milk complex in a modern dairy.

Be sure to use boiled water when preparing the formula and sterilise utensils and feeding bottles thoroughly to avoid infection. Do follow dosage on the pack strictly to prevent overdilution and ensure proper nourishment.

Free! Amul Baby Book Contains 13 fact-filled chapters on Pregnancy, Antenatal Care, Confinement, Breast-feeding, Outside Feeds, Change-over to Solids, Baby's Routine, Baby's Progress, Prevention of Illness, First Aid, Common Ailments of Childhood and Care of a Sick Child. ■ In English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. ■ Write to Post Box 10124, Bombay 400 001 with your name and address and Re. 1 postage stamp.

Spray dried
AMULSPRAY
from India's foremost co-operative milk complex

Marketed by:
Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd.
Post Box 10, Anand 388 001, Gujarat State.

nd widespread changes in hospital
res and health education to promote
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d Dr R.K. Anand, a Bombay paedia-
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effect of the statement: "Mother's milk is best for the baby."

Argued Dr Verghese Kurien, chairman and managing director of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) which markets Amul: "If Shah accepted this suggestion then he must have been weak. It was not our intention to stop putting the child's picture on the can. The package design is intended to show what is in it. You don't expect me to put a picture of an elephant on a baby food tin. I have to put a picture of what is in it, particularly when the educational level in our country is so low."

High Sales: But it was precisely because of the low educational level that both WHO and the Government's working group recommended removal of idealised pictures which make mothers believe that use of the formula would result in a plump and healthy child. For baby food manufacturers, however, formula sales are a high stakes business which they will clearly not give up without a fight. Kurien's organisation earned over Rs 50 crore of its Rs 163.6 crore sales from Amul baby foods last year, and sales continue to boom. Judging by the line-up of milk cooperatives with plans to launch baby food products, it is a profitable product. Admits Kurien: "They all think that baby food is what made Amul what it is, so how can I now ask them not to go in for it?"

Glaxo earns 14 per cent of its revenue, or roughly Rs 16 crore last year, from infant and weaning foods, and Nestlé over Rs 15 crore from its Lactogen brand alone. And a string of other formula brands, including "Angel", Lever, Parag and Vijay Spray churn out growing sales for their manufacturers.

Not surprisingly, the manufacturers continue to vigorously promote their products while the Government delays a decision on the WHO and working group recommendations.

Mother's milk is best for Baby.

But when you have to bottle-feed make sure you take care.

Follow these 10 important points...

1. Wash and sterilize feeding bottle, nipple and all utensils used. Otherwise milk can get contaminated very easily.
2. Boil the water for ten minutes and cool it to just above body temperature before you mix the milk powder. Very hot water will cause the fat content in the milk powder to separate. Whereas cool water will make it difficult to dissolve the powder.
3. Do not over-dilute feeds (except under doctor's advice) as this could lead to malnutrition.
4. As you feed, ensure that the feed is neither too hot nor too cold, by testing a little on the back of your hand. It is important that the feed is as close to body temperature as possible.
5. Check that the hole in the nipple is of the right size, so that milk comes out in large, round drops. If the flow of milk is too slow, it will make Baby work very hard at drawing it out. And if it is too fast, it may even choke him.
6. Remember, overfeeding is as harmful as under-feeding. Follow the feeding table given on the pack.
7. When breast-feeding is supplemented by bottle-feeding, see that they together make an adequate quantity.
8. Prepare a fresh feed for Baby each time. Do not give Baby left-over feeds, as milk gets contaminated.
9. Keep the tin in a cool, dry place away from strong odours. Keep lid tightly closed to avoid contamination.
10. Follow all the instructions given on the pack. If in doubt, consult the doctor.

Choose Glaxo Sunshine—the trusted infant milk food

- Glaxo Sunshine is hygienically prepared and packaged.
- Glaxo Sunshine is specially suited to Baby's tender digestion. A light and easily digested curd is formed in the stomach making it suitable for even the most delicate babies.
- Glaxo Sunshine is ideally balanced with the right amount of protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and iron.

No wonder Glaxo Sunshine has been trusted by mothers over the years...

SUNSHINE
Glaxo
INFANT MILK FOOD
BREAST-FEEDING IS BEST FOR BABY

Trust Glaxo—trusted by mothers.

Not surprisingly, the manufacturers continue to vigorously promote their products while the Government delays a decision on the WHO and working group recommendations. Kurien emphatically stated that he was not bound to follow the recommendations of either WHO or the Indian working group, and would only follow a code if it was laid down by the Indian Government. Glaxo's G.S. Fernando, general marketing manager in the company's family products division, similarly stated that his company had not accepted the WHO recommendations. Said Fernando: "When the final set of recommendations are approved by the Government, Glaxo India will accept them."

TO COUNTERACT the effect of the adverse publicity, baby food manufacturers in the country have launched huge "educational" advertisement campaigns which ostensibly promote breast-feeding while giving consumers information on the proper use of infant formula. Two years ago, while the controversy was at its height, the GCMMF introduced new advertisements titled "The Amul Code of Conduct", which informed consumers that Amul had always been in agreement with the spirit of the WHO code. More recently, the cooperative launched a massive newspaper campaign which tells mothers about the virtues of breast-feeding. Glaxo, similarly, now advertises that "mother's milk is best for the baby".

But the attempts are little more than an eyewash and the ads a mere cover-up for the same hard sell which characterised earlier operations. Notwithstanding Fernando's statement that Glaxo's advertising "does not necessarily increase sales", it is clear that the manufacturers advertise in order to boost formula sales. This is perhaps best summed up in Kurien's report to the GCMMF annual general meeting last month, where he says: "The entire issue of marketing of infant milk foods is presently the subject of study by the Central Government to consider legislation for a complete ban on advertising of infant milk foods…in case the proposed legislation comes into force, the federation will need to consider alternative strategies to ensure that the interests of the milk producers are safeguarded from the adverse impact of the legislation on our infant food market."

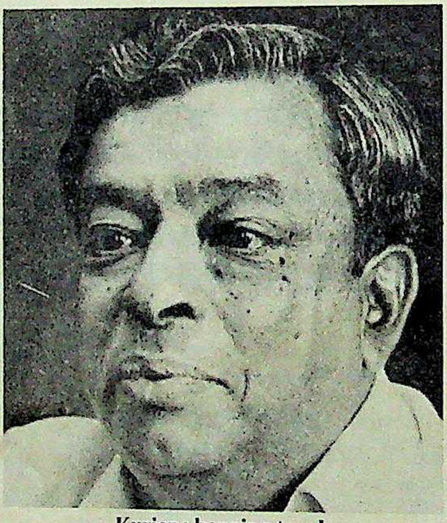
Suggestive Visuals: Consumer activists argue that the "educational" advertisements flout Article 5.1 of the WHO code and the Indian draft code, both of which call for a complete ban on advertising. "This is just a misleading way to continue your aggressive promotion," said Anand. "The advertisements mentioned the superiority of breast milk but the three most striking items in each are the large picture of an exceedingly healthy infant, a container of the infant milk powder, and the name of the manufacturer in bold type." Glaxo's latest advertisement, in fact, depicts a plump child in his mother's arms and, superimposed on the picture in such a way that it appears that the infant is reaching for it, is a large tin of Glaxo.

The token acceptance of WHO standards extends to some baby food containers also. Amul tins carry a statement of the superiority of mother's milk in 14 languages but, with educational standards abysmally low, the bonny baby depicted on its front is a more convincing attraction. Glaxo similarly carries the statement that "it is ideal to breast-feed the baby initially, if possible" on its tin. But, even if the statement's ambiguity were not enough, it is so skilfully hidden away on the tin's yellow rib that it is almost impossible to find.

The determination to get around WHO recommendations has led to prompt improvisation of promotional techniques by milk food companies. Recently, Food Specialities, the Nestlé subsidiary which manufactures Lactogen in India, having stopped advertising world-wide after a massive consumer boycott in the US came up with yet another means of violating the WHO code. Although the code forbids direct promotion of baby foods to laymen and mothers, Food Specialities was last month distributing free writing pads to mothers via gynaecologists, paediatricians and nurses. At the bottom of each page appear depictions of the Lactogen 'First-age Formula' and 'Follow-up Formula' and on its rear the statement: "Breast milk is the best…if you have enough milk, breast-feed your baby at regular intervals, six times a day."

But gynaecologists argue that statements like this are both misleading and dangerous, since the mother is not capable of judging whether she has enough milk or not. Said a leading Bombay gynaecologist: "This could well affect her 'let-down' reflex and actually retard the flow of milk." Adds Anand: "These are mischievous statements used deliberately by infant food manufacturers. Nestlé advises that you breast-feed your infant at regular four-hourly intervals, which is contrary to every principle of infant management. Any mother who follows this advice will find her child crying between feeds and then, thinking that he's hungry because she does not have enough, will introduce artificial feeding."

Pervasive Influences: The influences are subtle but ever-present. Many nursing homes and maternity clinics in Bombay are adorned by framed Nestlé posters which advertise Lactogen while ostensibly extolling breast feeding. The Burham Maternity Home, like many others, specifically asks prospective mothers to bring Lactogen and a feeding bottle at the time of admission. In other clinics, Nestlé "medical delegates", dressed misleadingly like nurses, approach mothers directly and, in the guise of a lecture on the craft of motherhood, promote Lactogen and Nestlé weaning foods and leave the mother free samples of each.


Kurien: hanging tough

Said Dr R.P. Agarwal, professor of paediatrics at the Nair Hospital and National Medical College in Bombay: "Last year I found Nestlé women in our maternity wards trimming the nails of new mothers and otherwise helping them with post-natal hygiene. But this is nothing but a cover for the company's sales promotion. In addition, recent literature from Nestlé to paediatricians suggests that they have evolved a new formula which is as good as m which is another clear violatio code."

More than a decade after versy of the bottle first flared u manufacturers in India contin the aggressive promotion of inf on the ground that they are use educated, upper class mothers stand and follow usage instructio age schedules. But a consecutive infants admitted in Bombay's N Hospital in 1980, 55.5 per cent of been given formula feeds, s monthly per capita income in 7 of the infants' families was less while in 49.55 per cent it was be

Of the mothers who fed the mula milk powder 47.37 per ce rate, 82 per cent over-diluted th 93.7 per cent did not sterilise the nipples properly. Only 16 of the who administered formula feeds ing. Most shockingly, all 13 of who died were fed on formula m studies abound.

Changes Resisted: Despite alarming evidence against form last fortnight the Government w to taking a final decision. A se ment official admitted that dra which sought to ban advertising tion was turned down by the L on the grounds that it would no court, and opposed by the Info Broadcasting Ministry which fe revenue due to reduced advertis darshan and All India Radio.

But the excuses were trans was clear that baby food manu this time by the GCMMF rather th nationals, had prevailed. In ments in almost every state alre to ban promotion and adverti intoxicants. There is thus a we precedent for banning baby foo

Taking advantage of apathy, aggressive sales practic Glaxo mounted a fresh campai doctors and health workers About to go public with an is shares for statutory dilution of ings, Glaxo sent preferential sh coupons for 50 shares each Bombay paediatricians from ved "for business associates of only". Since each share is pr while it is valued at Rs 26 on change, the doctors stand to m 'accepting the preferential al accepting it would make me a ciate of Glaxo," said one Bom cian, "and you can imagine th would demand of their busin

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he revolutionary lathe
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DAIHATSU PNC LATHE

PNC

PNC L 551/PNC L 552

Programmable Numerical Control lathe

The lathe that revolutionized productivity in Japan,now comes to India!

For further information on this versatile, advanced machine contact:

he Daihatsu PNC Lathe is so versatile hat it converts a semi-skilled technician nto a high-precision technologist. ecause anyone with just enough nowledge to read a blueprint can rogram a Daihatsu easily, peedily — and without error.

uilt-in high performance micro-omputors and LSI's (exclusive to PNC) elp edit and independently assemble programmes, which can be stored and selected at the press of a switch and the machine can be reset in 2 minutes or less. 106 machinable shapes are pre-programmed to ensure optimum efficiency and operational economy.

The Daihatsu PNC lathe has all the skills built into it for precision and productivity... you only tap the skill.

Beco engineering company limited
23/7, Delhi Mathura Road,
Ballabgarh - 121 004 (HARYANA) India
Tele: Delhi : 88621, 88369 & 88221
Bombay : 231025, 231174
Madras :441596, Telex 041-461
Calcutta : 46-9507, 46-9735, Telex 021-7665

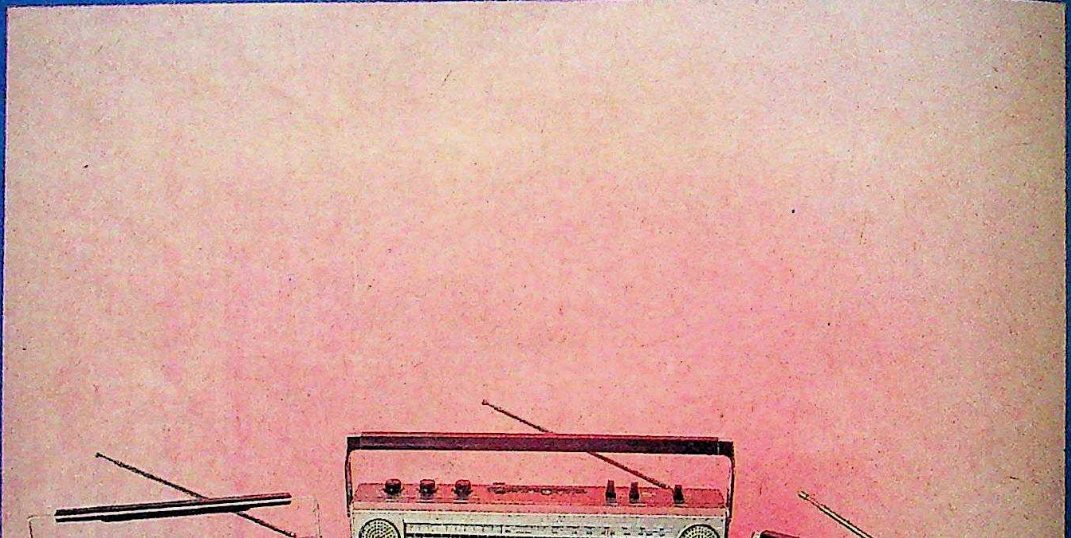
It takes years of patience to master the Japanese art of cultivating bonsais.

Featured here, in the privacy of a terrace garden: the Golden Dew Drop Duranta, Barbados Cherries and the Buddha Belly Bamboo.

The suit: quiet undertones of beige and grey, in a light, summer blend. Unmistakably...DIGJAM.

DIGJAM
Suitings for the Connoisseur
A product of Shree Digvijaya Woollen Mills Ltd.

Flying to Tokyo
on a shopping spree?
Stop...look... listen.
And do some of that shopping
right here.



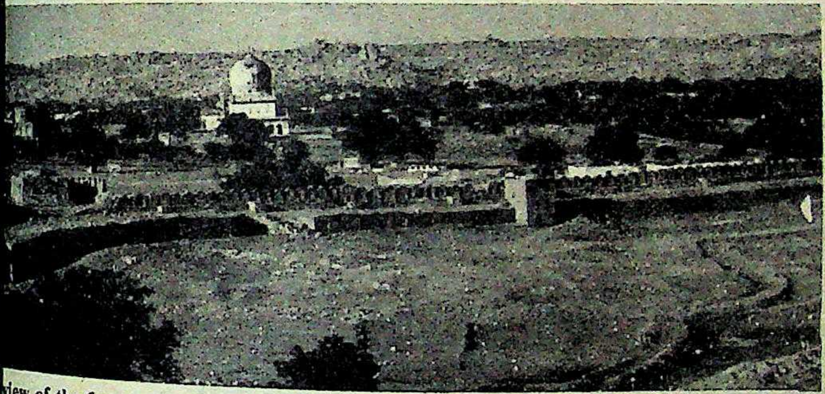
Nelco's fantastic range of Stereo Two-in-Ones,
Mono Two-in-Ones and Mono Cassette Recorders
are as good as any abroad. There's a
whole range to choose from.

NELCO

Two-in-Ones and Cassette Recorders
In a world-class range.

NDA

Threatened Bastion



iew of the fort, with the white marker stones of the proposed housing plots

E FABLED fort of Golconda, on e outskirts of Hyderabad, is facing e of the most insidious attacks in its history. In recent weeks, two hous- ties, called Abbassi and Parkae, ked out into plots about 35 acres veen the inner fort and the tombs of onda kings. Elsewhere in the fort is available for prices ranging bet- 40 and Rs 120 a sq yard. All deals through local toughs. The autho- apathetic about this unscrupulous ment, and it looks as if the strong- e Qutb Shahi rulers of Hyderabad, pt even the redoubtable Mughal Aurangzeb at bay for eight months will soon give in to the real estate

population in the walled area has dily—from 7,500 in 1961 to 17,700 and some old residents, who hold s to the land, have also joined the s in the blatant trade in land. aws to prevent construction in or istorical sites, and the rule that plans have to be cleared by local s are being cheerfully flouted. stry officials admit that land-grab n; says one: "It is a communally ituation because Hindus and Mus- legally occupying land and cultiva- walled area."

ort and its environs occupy about but only a fourth of this is in the the Archaeological Survey of India job is to protect the fort and the outer wall while the tombs out- oked after by the Andhra Pradesh nt of Archaeology. The ASI has guards and two supervisors who , but this contingent is obviously gh to keep the land racketeers at

Old Estate: The controversy over ownership has also fouled up matters. The fort, the palaces and the tombs belonged to the Sarf-e-Khas, or the private estate of the Nizams of Hyderabad. Says an official of the former royal palace works: "Land in and around the fort was not sold but allotted on lease, free of cost for a specified period, and was known as the *atiya sultani*, or royal gift. The area was in the control of the Golconda Brigade and it remained the Nizam's property though civil administration functioned in the walled area." The officials are not at all certain how the residents acquired title rights by the early '50s.

The fort itself shows all the signs of neglect. Plants sprout from cracks in the granite, houses have come up close to the walls and the teak-wood gates, the moat is choked and in some places the walls are defaced. Says state Director of Archaeology V.V. Krishna Sastry: "New legislation and more money is necessary for better conservation. Now archaeologists do not have the powers to stop any construction or building activity in the vicinity of historic monuments and sites. There should be a law providing for a free zone for effective protection of monuments."

Archaeologists emphasise that the neglect is not confined to Golconda. Says one: "The situation here is far better than in most places. A two-storeyed building has come up next to the wall of the fort in Raichur in Karnataka. Some stones have been removed from the fort to build a nearby cattle shed. In Andhra Pradesh, centuries-old bricks have been taken from Satavahana sites to build houses in nearby villages. Limestone from Buddhist stupas has been stolen and powdered for use in the *rangavalli* motifs decorating courtyards in village homes."

Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Urban Arts Commission, an official advisory panel comprising artists, architects, urban planners and others has suggested that Golconda be declared a special conservation area to preserve its unique character. Says commission member and well-known artist Laxma Goud: "Golconda is an example of monumental neglect. It is not merely a question of spending money on conservation measures. People should be made to feel proud of their heritage and the fort will be automatically protected and saved."

Land registry officials and the ASI have been suggesting that the state Government buy all vacant and agricultural land and hand it over to the ASI. Says urban planning researcher and former administrator V.K. Bawa: "The first step to newer conservation efforts is to ban all construction in the fort city and preserve all historic remains in its environs."

Although Golconda attracts a large number of visitors, and the famous name has been commercially exploited as brand name for wines and cigarettes, the state Government does not seem to be interested in cleaning up the walled city. If the fort finally falls to the land marauders, it will be in keeping with its tradition—three centuries ago, Aurangzeb could only conquer it because of treachery by the enemy within.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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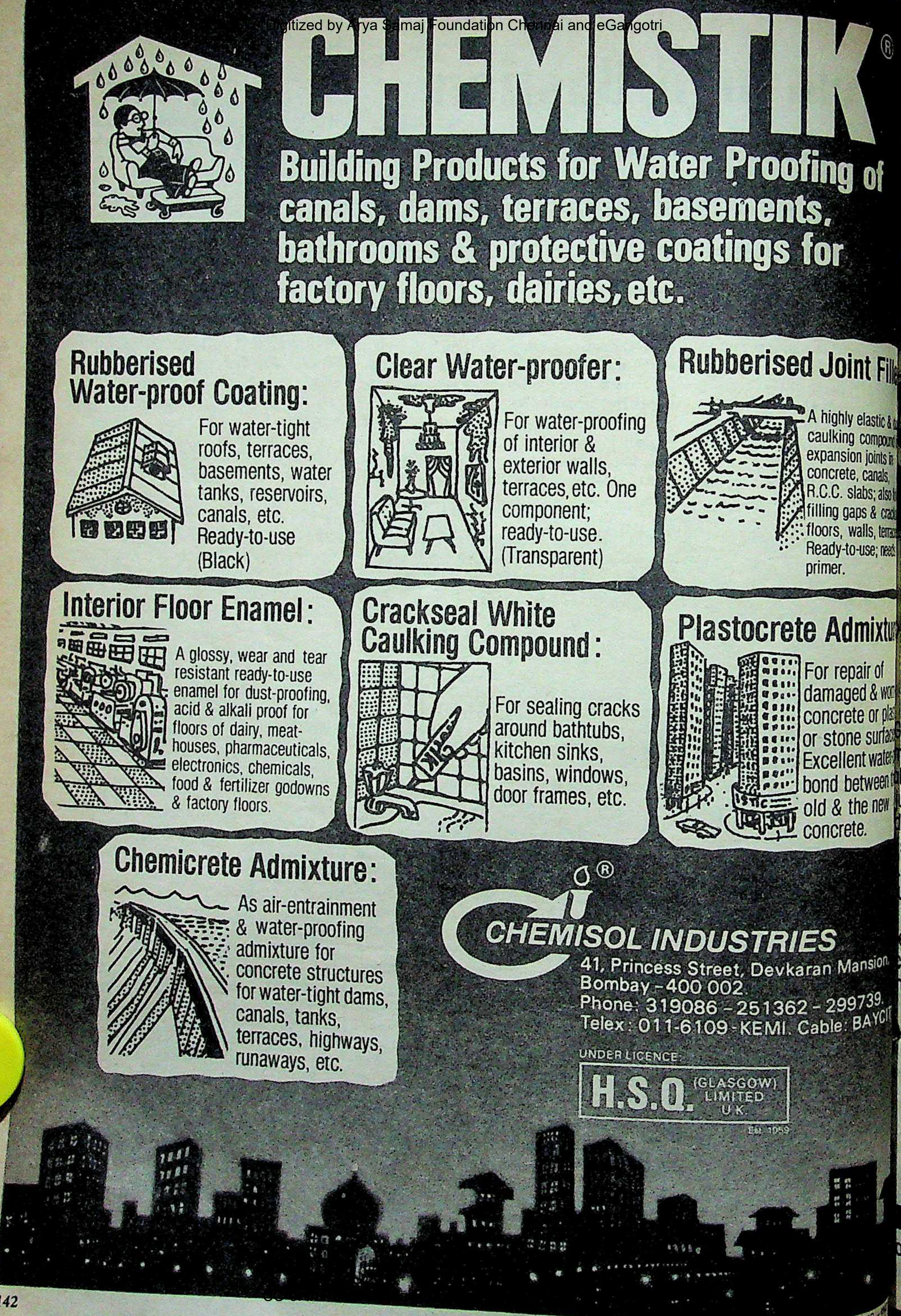

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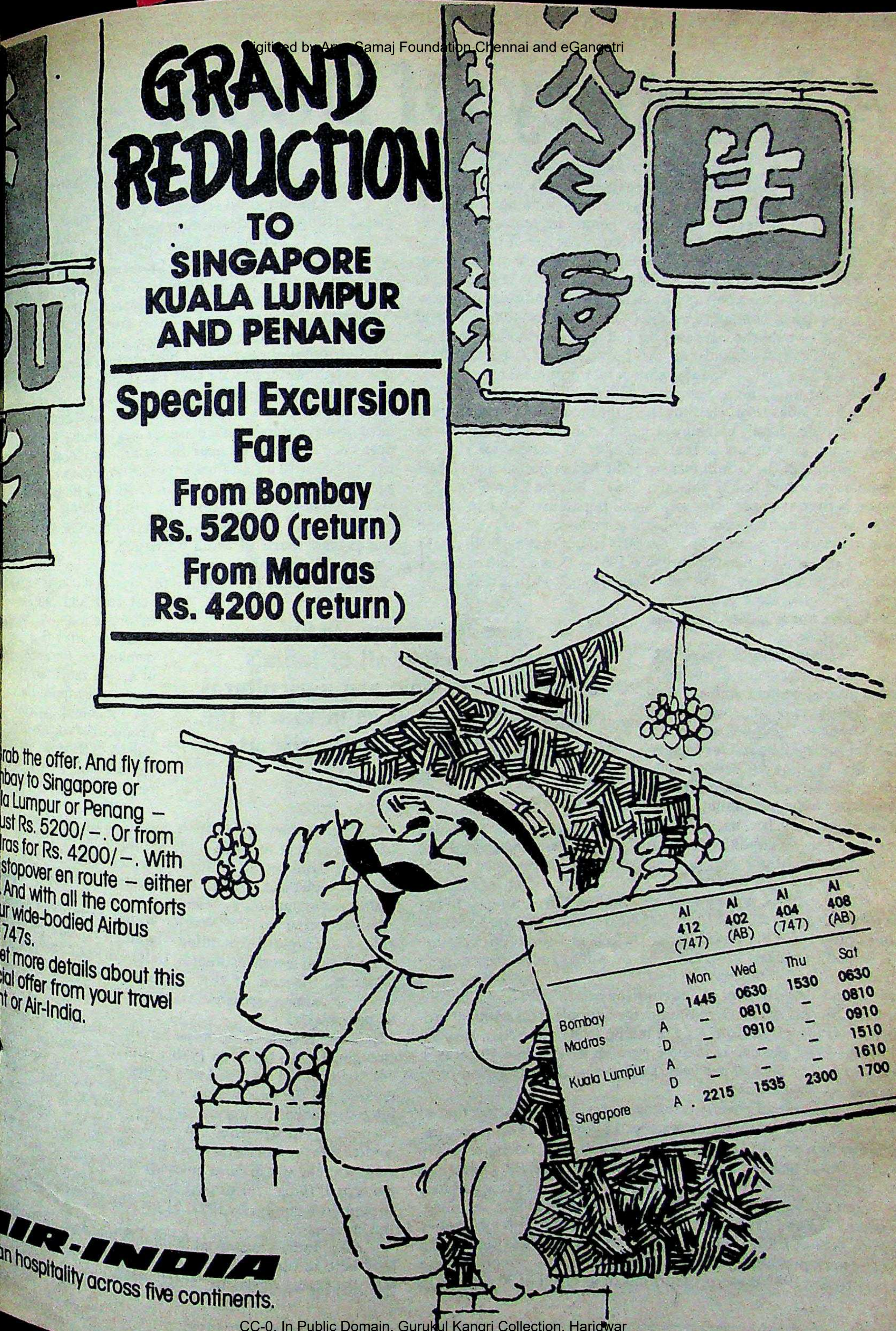

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A Prophecy Of Doom

A LEADING Washington-based demographic think-tank has pronounced India's two-decade-old family planning programme an unmitigated flop. It maintains that unless immediate and urgent measures are adopted to control the size of Indian families, the country will slip into economic, social, political and environmental chaos. This latest Malthusian prophecy of doom is contained in an exhaustive and comprehensive study now being conducted by the Orkand Corporation. The final report will be published this summer and is expected to be circulated widely; but a draft advance copy has been obtained by INDIA TODAY.

India's annual population growth rate is now estimated at 2.2 per cent for the 1970s as compared with the 2 per cent rate for the 1960s. This indicates a "startling fact", the report says. "The country with the oldest family planning programme in the world has seen its population growth rate increase even after 30 years of effort."

Officials of the Government of India had projected that India's population would be 672 million in 1981. "But the 25 million difference between the projected and actual population total, however, casts serious doubts upon previous estimates of India's birth and death rates, and especially upon the early claims that the birth rate in India had declined markedly between 1965—75 as a result of family planning programmes." The statistics indicate a birth rate of 38–39 per 1,000—the same as it was in 1971, and much higher than past official estimates.

Credibility Gap: There appears to be a growing disenchantment among western analysts with the theory that improved living conditions in India will automatically stimulate demand for smaller families. Waiting for development to bring about a decrease in fertility is a luxury India just cannot afford, these experts say, because spiralling population growth has worsened per capita living conditions, and India's food resources, social and economic conditions and environment have deteriorated significantly over the past decade.

The report repeatedly emphasises that all of India's industrial, economic and agricultural progress will have been in vain if the population continues to rise at the present rate.

These experts, among them the Orkand Corporation—do not view India's progress with the sometimes rosy and oft-expressed cautious optimism of the World Bank. The Indian population explosion has already wreaked irreversible havoc within India, according to them. The draft report points out:

► India's original goal of doubling the nation's per capita income remains beyond reach. Even though the nation's gross national product (GNP) increased from Rs 172 billion to Rs 450 billion between 1950 and 1980, per capita income went up by less than 50 per cent from Rs 470 to Rs 690 per year. During that 30-year period India doubled its population.

► The widespread poverty is further aggravated by the fact that 40 per cent of India's population is under 15 years old. This places tremendous burdens on Government as well as the working economy because funds needed for schools, in addition to health clinics and food, require massive proportions of the country's tax expenditures.

► India's food production remains erratic. It is, in fact, declining. Between 1972 and 1976 per capita food production was even below the poor year of 1967. 1980 saw similar results when less than 200 kg of grain were produced per capita, forcing India to import and use reserve stocks. 1981 saw crop shortfalls of as much as 30 per cent in some areas and India had to purchase 1.5 million tons of
America.

"The Indian grain reserve," says the report, "is no
pleted. Hunger and destitution again stalk India. Crop
reach 11 to 12 m tons this year. Distribution networks a
very costly. In the late 1970s the Government had to spe
$560 million to help distribute food to drought-hit are

William Towell, former president of the Ameri
Association, who returned recently from a visit to Ind
nightmarish account of India's population problem: "It
the multitudes of people that bothered me as much as th
tion of soil, water and air that has resulted from their
tion. Six hundred million people is simply more than
ment can sustain indefinitely. Modern medicines and
have greatly extended life expectancies in India, but nat
port systems are at or near the saturation point. I saw
effort to control air and water pollution. Practically eve
was an open sewer and the air in Delhi and Bombay, at
visible cloud of exhaust and industrial pollution that ir
eyes and throat. I had the overpowering reaction that it a
late in many parts of India we visited."

► Land degradation and soil erosion are becoming a
cultural problem. The demand for firewood is eroding th
soil base and causing
deforestation. A W
study reported that th
demand for firewood is
at such a rapid rate th
ready outstripped the
the remaining natural
produce the volume of
quired. Demand for
agricultural land is
result in the virtual dis
of India's tropical fo
end of the century. In addition, land overuse "has alread
over 10 per cent of India's 150 million acres of irrigated
seriously damaged by siltation, as waterlogging increases
of water tables as a result of inadequate natural drainage
overuse of irrigation systems".

► According to the World Watch Institute, Indi
villages are rapidly expanding—adding 15 million peopl
According to several estimates, India will lose 25 million
pland by the end of this century as a result of th
ment of human settlements as urban areas increase
60 per cent.

► There is little or no hope for increased employme
emerging labour force. In 1980, about 25 per cent of In
lion high school-qualified and college graduates were
And during the last two decades—a period during whi
force dependent on agriculture rose from 70 to 74 per
unemployment worsened. In 1960, 28 per cent depend
landowners for work and food. By 1980, this figure jum
cent. And the size of farm holdings also decreased. In 19
per cent of India's farms were below the 2.5 acre minim
to support a family; by 1971, 51 per cent of India's farm
this minimum.

All of India's industrial, economic and agricultural
have been in vain if the population continues to rise a
rate, the report repeatedly emphasises.

E INDIAN Government reacted to the 1980 census figures y calling for a "revitalisation" of the family planning proamme that had fallen on bad times because of the lingering of the forced sterilisations during the Emergency. The andhi Government plans to train 2,00,000 *dais* (birth attenproviding contraceptive services and information to India's on couples of child-bearing age.

ddition to the $875 million India has spent on similar activing the last 10 years, the Government plans to allocate an al $200 million. The goal is to reduce the birth rate to 27 per 1,000 by 1990. The oubts that this will ever be achieved. It at the goal adopted in 1964 was to reduce h rate to 25 per 1,000 by 1975.

he record of family planning in India is dismal; making similar future efforts omewhat futile. From a high of 8 million ions performed in 1976–77, just slightly han one million were performed in . The number of women using IUD's had from 580,000 in 1976–77 to about in 1980. The birth rate estimates for e difficult to interpret in that some are part on estimated levels of contraceptive the impact of various family planning ser-As of March 1981, the study reports, the ge of eligible couples effectively particin birth control and family planning was per cent—well below the 30 per cent rate ch 1977.

lty Evaluation: Previous optimistic stay Indian Government officials about the s" of the country's family planning pro- "are unfortunate", the report says, "in y have led US Government officials to that family planning programmes were ul. Indian officials, in turn, have cited tistics as proof that Government-backed planning programmes are succeeding. Government estimates of programme ments may be inflated. Three independent made during the '70s confirmed that ment family planning statistics were geneerror, making an evaluation of the proextremely difficult. Despite the presence pulation research centres entrusted with uation of the country's family planning me; inadequate staffing and bureaucraols have produced no evaluation studies "

became clear by 1981 that the family planogramme in India has had little or no the country's birth rate. This is partly besome of the following misconceptions on he programme is based: First is the assumat because of high infant mortality rates n woman has more births than her desily size. In other words, an Indian woman e six to eight births over her lifetime even though the number en she actually desired, on average, was between four to six. ment family planners believed that the provision of modern eptives would reduce the number of births as well as allow to space their children, thereby achieving better health and a on in infant mortality.

t studies done in Nepal, Pakistan and India indicate that "women who experience infant mortality compensate by having more births. Those who do not have infant mortality have fewer births. This suggests that the ultimate number of children desired is what governs fertility behaviour. The data suggests that a reduction in the infant mortality rate would result in a reduction in the number of births. It will not, however, result in a decline in the population growth rate, unless there is a corresponding drop in the desired family size."

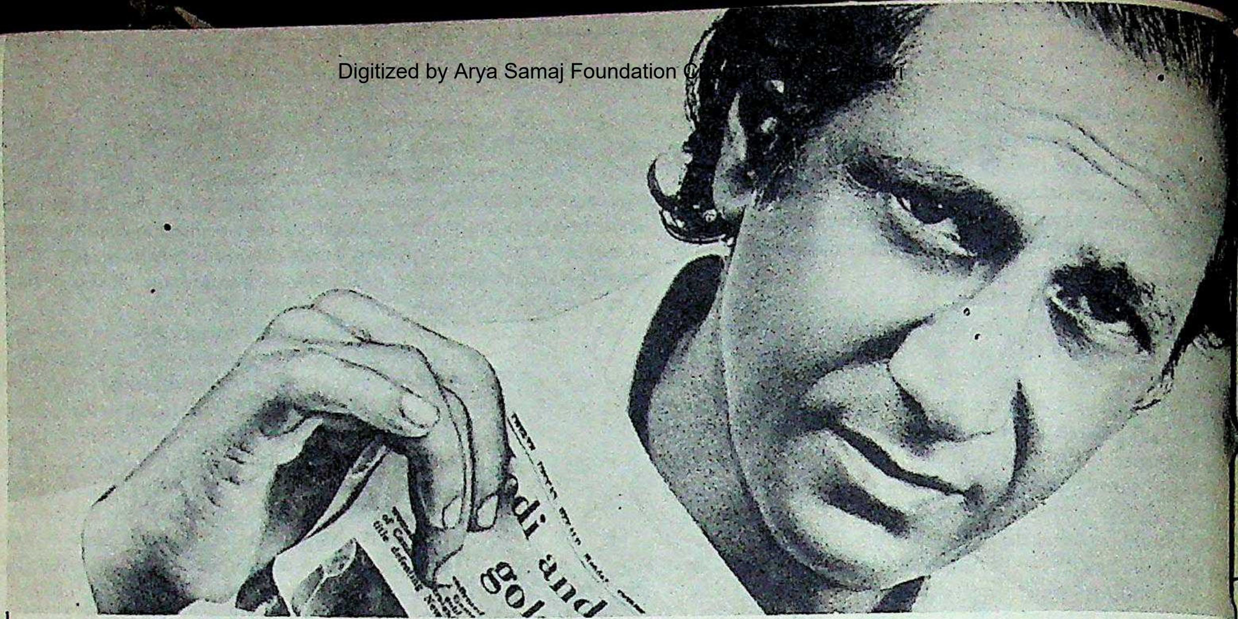
The baby boom: unchecked

Several studies show that the use of contraceptives is not effective. According to a report by the Foreign Policy Association of the US: "The results have been far from spectacular except perhaps in certain areas such as the Punjab where general social and economic conditions are relatively elevated. Early marriage, poverty, illiteracy and a demographic structure with a very high proportion of the population in the child-bearing age, all militate against breaking of the dangerously high growth rate. Data suggests that women do not even seek contraceptive methods until they have more children than needed to meet India's target birth rate. Thus 32.5 per cent of all sterilised Indian women already have six living children."

The Orkand Report finds that those who accept family planning in India have an average of more than four living children at the time they begin to participate in the programme. The total number of contraceptive acceptors in 1979–80 was no greater than in the early '70s "even though the number of eligible couples had increased dramatically during the interval", the report says. In addition, the average age of rural Indian women at the time they give birth to their third child is 25 years. A review of contraceptive "acceptors" in a dozen vasectomy camps showed that the average age of the wife ranged from 30 years (in Kerala) to 38 years (in Uttar Pradesh). The number of living children per sterilised couple in both Kerala and Uttar Pradesh was about four.

Faulty Approach: The report gives short shrift to another "misconception"—that development and improved living conditions will automatically lead to smaller families: "There is no guarantee that India or any developing country can sufficiently improve living conditions so as to markedly change family size preference. Unfortunately, the pressures of population growth are leading to serious environmental and resource constraints which are, in turn, making any significant improvement in living standards impossible. Thus one cannot 'solve' the population explosion by appealing to the hope of improved living conditions when the very problem that needs to be solved (population growth) is making the necessary improvements in living conditions impossible to obtain."

The study concludes that the only way out for India is for massive changes in age-old traditions which will require structural and cultural changes. "Deliberately created," such changes will place a greater premium on small families than large ones. "Until and unless family planners are willing to junk faulty premises upon which their traditional programmes are based, continued programmes of 'family planning' will produce failure and frustration... Family planning is being practised—but, unfortunately, people are planning large families, not small ones."



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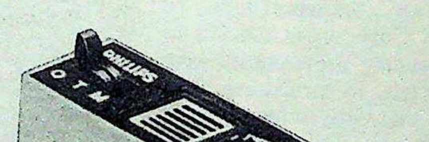

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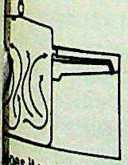

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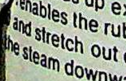

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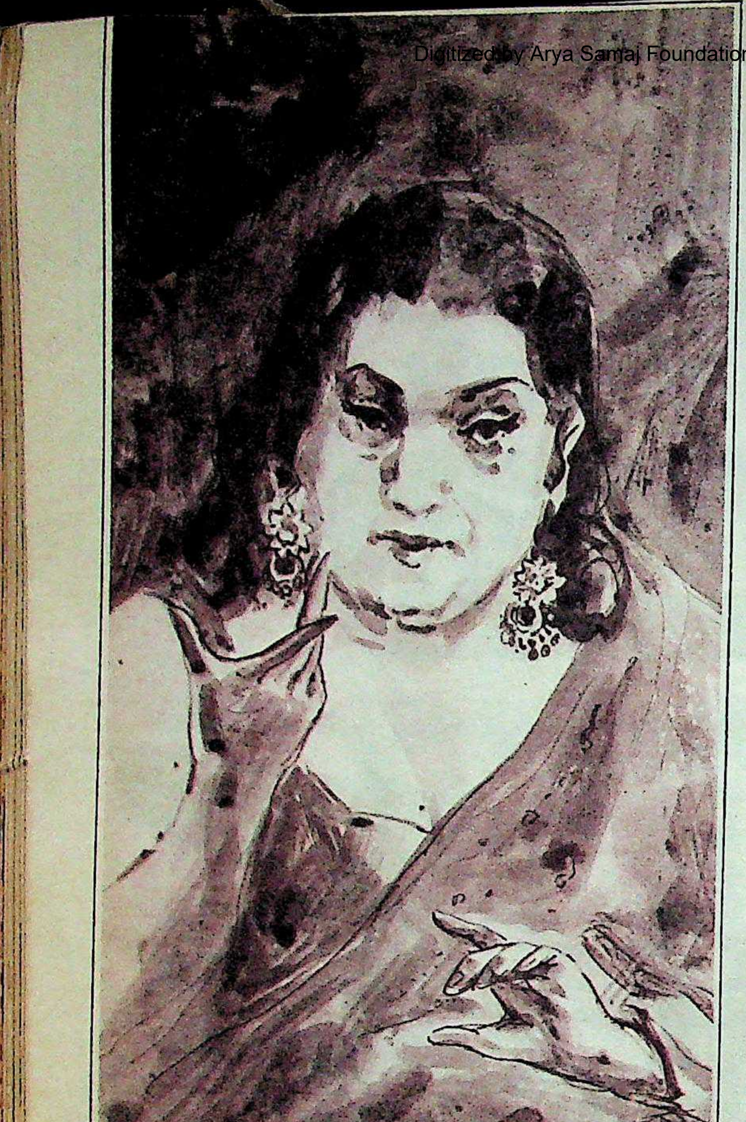


ILLUSTRATION BY SUDDHA

DELHI'S Garson Bastion Road—G.B. for short way street. Also two-faced: by day an industrial hardware dealers, by night a whorehouse cate software of the senses. Perhaps the street's position its double life: it runs precisely between two worlds, dividing axis that separates New Delhi from Old. If you p any of the little lanes leading off it, you would arri quadrangle of Jama Masjid. And if you cross over to railway line running parallel to it, it will take you to the New Delhi station.

And if during the busy daylight hours, you ignore street-level trade in machine pumps, thermostats and fittings, and walk up a dingy staircase, you may still be o street but caught in the wrong act. For 36 years, since the c and dancing girls moved from their haunt in Chawri Bazar walled city, the prostitutes of Delhi have plied their tra

Mid-afternoon last fortnight, two simpering young standing at the top of one such staircase. Half a dozen you with painted faces, faintly amused by their nervousness, we them in. Hectic bargaining had reduced the men into e giggles. "Not me, not me," one of them said as he shrank he who wants to." His friend's enthusiasm was also begin when one of the girls grabbed him by the arm and pulled hi threshold. "Come on, brother," she said, in a brisk, no tone, "it's Rs 25 for both of you." As the boys disappeared girls began to giggle—it was their turn.

The face of the traditional Indian *kotha* has changed has gone out of the *kotha*, the courtliness of the courtesan

MADA

vanished. Few old-time survivors are left in the flea-pi Road. But they are there.

Life above stairs may not always end as a mundane co ritual. If the afternoon visitors had about-turned and stepp dark, high-ceilinged, heavily-curtained hall, they might nessed a scene out of Cinderella (the kitchen sequence ballroom one). A wicked-aunt-type sits roasting herself burning charcoal brazier, clipping betel from a gilt *pa* large moonface bears vicious stains of relentless pa around the mouth. Her head is nearly bald. Her eyebrows altogether. Draperies of white flesh hang each time she lifts This is Maya Devi, the most celebrated of G.B. Road m doyenne of the dancing girls.

Once her charms were so formidable, that she had th Nimmi, then a dancing girl from Agra, chased out when invited to perform a *mujra* at a royal wedding in Bharatp her contemporaries became film stars—there was o Bibo who emigrated to Pakistan—and some of h mother's colleagues' daughters also became leading fi Bombay.

Neither the movies nor the men could lure Maya D She's been at the *kotha*, performing non-stop, since 1946. herself a house in the suburbs, her daughter is respectab and her grandchildren attend a convent school. But she ca thought of leaving G.B. Road. "I feel lost in the evenings You begin to miss the song and the dance, the men coming Sometimes I spend the mornings in my house but I alwa the evening. It's such fun," she says, her thin red lips pu girlish with a slight affectation to lisp. Her words are strung in st elegant of Urdu. Her tiny hands flutter over the gilt box ng tiny paans. The body may go to seed in a *kotha* but the ys young and alive.

ome tonight," she says, "after 10. Or come any other night." iously her favourite line, but the invitation comes straight he heart.

NIGHT the street is chill and dark and crawling with policemen. Upstairs, Maya Devi's establishment is bursting with light and music and girls. *Her* girls—not the Rs wo sluts across the courtyard. About a dozen of them are against one wall, with the musicians and the mirrors, under fse plastic chandeliers and the gilt-framed photographs of adame in her heyday. The red carpet is out for the ballroom ow the white bolsters are neatly placed against the walls. All of customers waft up the stairs: young Afghan students, down-at-heel businessmen, travelling salesmen, ministry aybe, their breath heavy with the smell of liquor. For Rs 10, 0 or the odd Rs 50-note (never Rs 100 as change is provided), burst into hit numbers from films like *Umrao Jaan*.

e are *tawaifs*, not *peshewallis*," says Maya Devi, primly the distinction between dancing girls and any accompanying s of carnal pleasure. In an inner room, equipped with a e and television set, she has settled on her bed for serious ation. Visitors are expected to climb up and join her. She ompletely transformed: her short wig trails round her g neckline. The just-painted eyebrows flicker in lascivious on. Hooped diamond ear-rings hang from her ears. A d turquoise ring—a gift from a certain nawab sahib—glitters small finger.

hen Maya Devi started her training in song and dance in her other's establishment in Simla she was eleven. Her other—"you are too young to know, but ask your "—was the famous courtesan Maina Bai. Her *kotha* in Jakoo d the rich and famous, an assortment of nawabs and ngs and jagirdars—"especially the 22 Pahari rajas".

aya and her younger sister Vidya were an instant success when de their debut in Delhi. It was 1946. The film star Nimmi, lled Nawab had a sister called Shabab, and they too ed duets. The rivalry between the two teams was intense. as, of course, the unpleasant Bharatpur incident, but once r girls came to blows.

e wore beautiful clothes," says Maya Devi, patting her ri in distaste. "Embroidered dupattas, ghararas and wide Look now: one has to wrap up in these wretched saris."

ourtesan's training was commensurate with her mystique. Devi learnt dance—her aunti Nanti Bai insisted—from the maestro Achhan Maharaj. Some of the great masters of music were accessible in their *kotha*: Ghulam Qadir Khan, ahid Khan of Kirana and, later, Ustad Chand Khan all er. When her voice rises to convey a complex musical phrase he can demonstrate the difference between a thumri and or a kajri and chaiti. From memory she can quote long s of the poet Zauq; her knowledge of Persian is adequate to remember couplets by Hafiz and Sadi.

But it is the nuance of her manner that cannot be taught: the coquettish shake of the head, the flirtatious arch of the eyebrow, the subtle gesticulations of her hands. "You know," she asks preparing another round of paan, "what the word *tawaif* means? Well, it means fragrance. A *tawaif* is one from whose lips fall fragrant flowers. Her courtesy and cleanliness are unmatched. She has the greatest good manners. When a request is made to a *tawaif*—provided it is made respectfully—she must never turn it down. She must comply with complete civility. And she must never lose control."

MAYA Devi cannot remember when it all changed, the exact point when the tradition of the *tawaif* plunged into disrepute. Maybe there wasn't an exact moment. Till the mid and late '50s it was common—even customary among sections of the upper class—to visit a *kotha* for a night out, or for the well-heeled and musically inclined to keep a woman there. Men frequented *kothas* not for prompt sexual gratification like the young men at the top of the staircase, but for a prolonged affair, a fulfilment of all senses. Nor could *tawaifs*, in Maya Devi's heyday—she made her debut for her "nosering ceremony", a kind of official deflowering at the rather late age of 20—leave the *kotha* and be seen on the street outside. Purdah was strict.

In matters more intimate, a strict code was followed: Maya Devi was deflowered by a distinguished Rajput nobleman; her discretion does not permit her to take names. Other admirers must have followed. There has been no man in her life for 20 years, she says, explaining that true courtesans are among the most loyal of women. "Once they love they will destroy themselves for their love. It is the men who are faithless. They've spread the bad word for the *tawaif*."

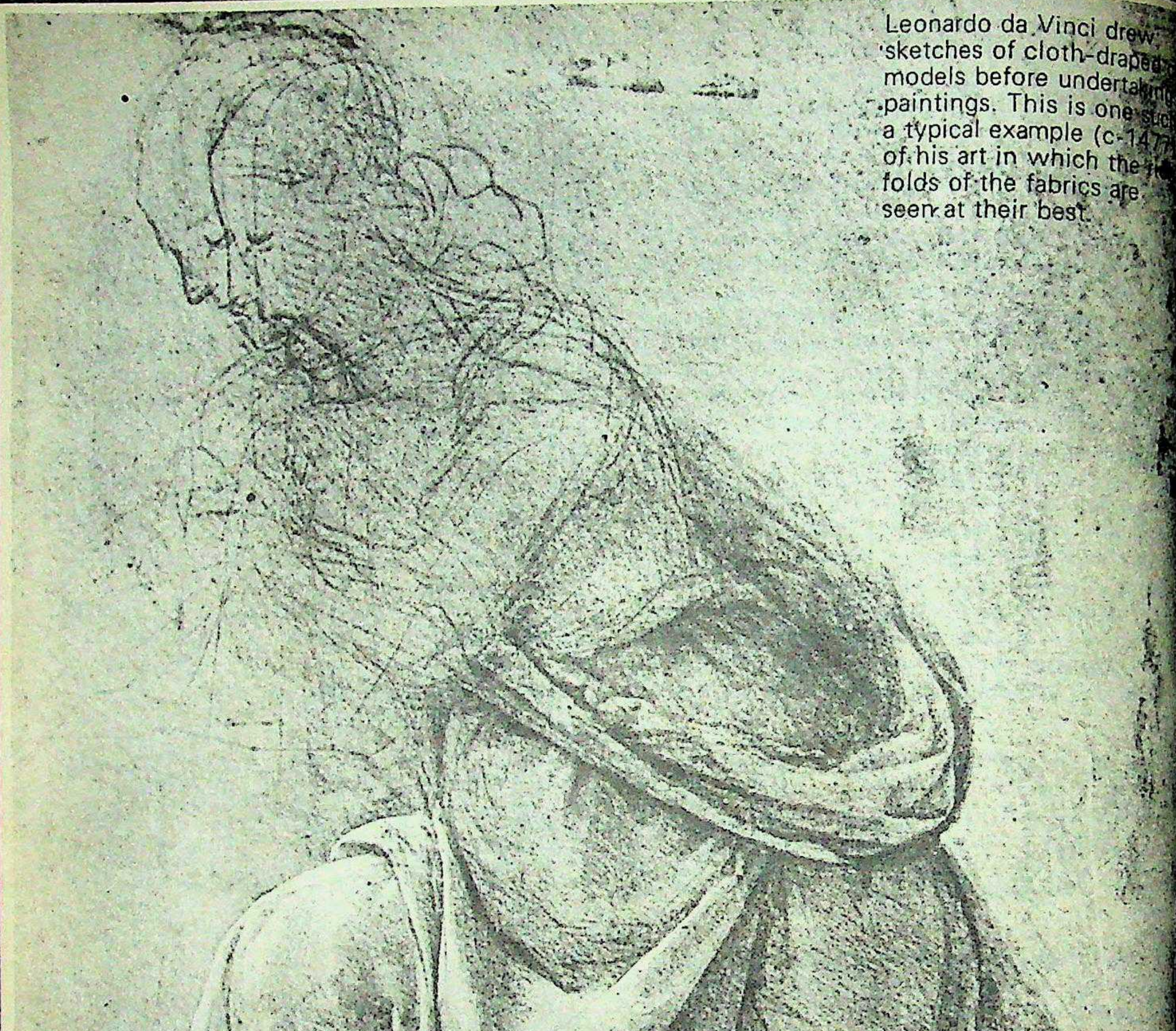
These days Maya Devi is loyal to the Congress(I). She campaigns passionately for Mrs Gandhi. The powers-that-be have changed since the time of the rajas and nawabs; so has the nature of passion. Most important, the notion of respectability has changed. Maya Devi, who never married, bringing up her late sister's child as her own, today refuses to be photographed for fear of being identified as her daughter's mother, or her granddaughter's grandmother.

These days she sings on special occasions: when she is invited out to a *mujra* or when special guests show up to hear her and she has the *kotha* closed. But when she sings, with immense facility and for long stretches, her shrewd eyes miss nothing. They don't miss the cash notes being proferred—even at the far end of the room—though her earnings are obviously thin. "You see the kind of men who walk up?" she says of a few seedy types who've planted themselves against the bolsters. "They're called the middle class. You'd be lucky to collect a couple of hundred rupees of an evening. Because the true *tawaif* never asks. She must accept what she gets."

It upsets Maya Devi that there are few of her tribe left. For some time now she has been looking after the interest of her community—there are some 5 crore with musicians she claims spread throughout the country—through an organisation called Jhanak Jhanak Payal. But she feels she's fighting a losing battle. The age of the *kotha* is in its decline. The new girls are dirty, they won't sing or dance seriously, they want to make a fast buck. "Your children may never see a *tawaif*," she says, "they will have to make do with silly movies like *Umrao Jaan*. A way of life will end. You know why? Because the middle class killed it."

—SUNIL SETHI

ASINGS HER BLUES



Leonardo da Vinci drew sketches of cloth-draped models before undertak paintings. This is one suc a typical example (c-147 of his art in which the folds of the fabrics are seen at their best.

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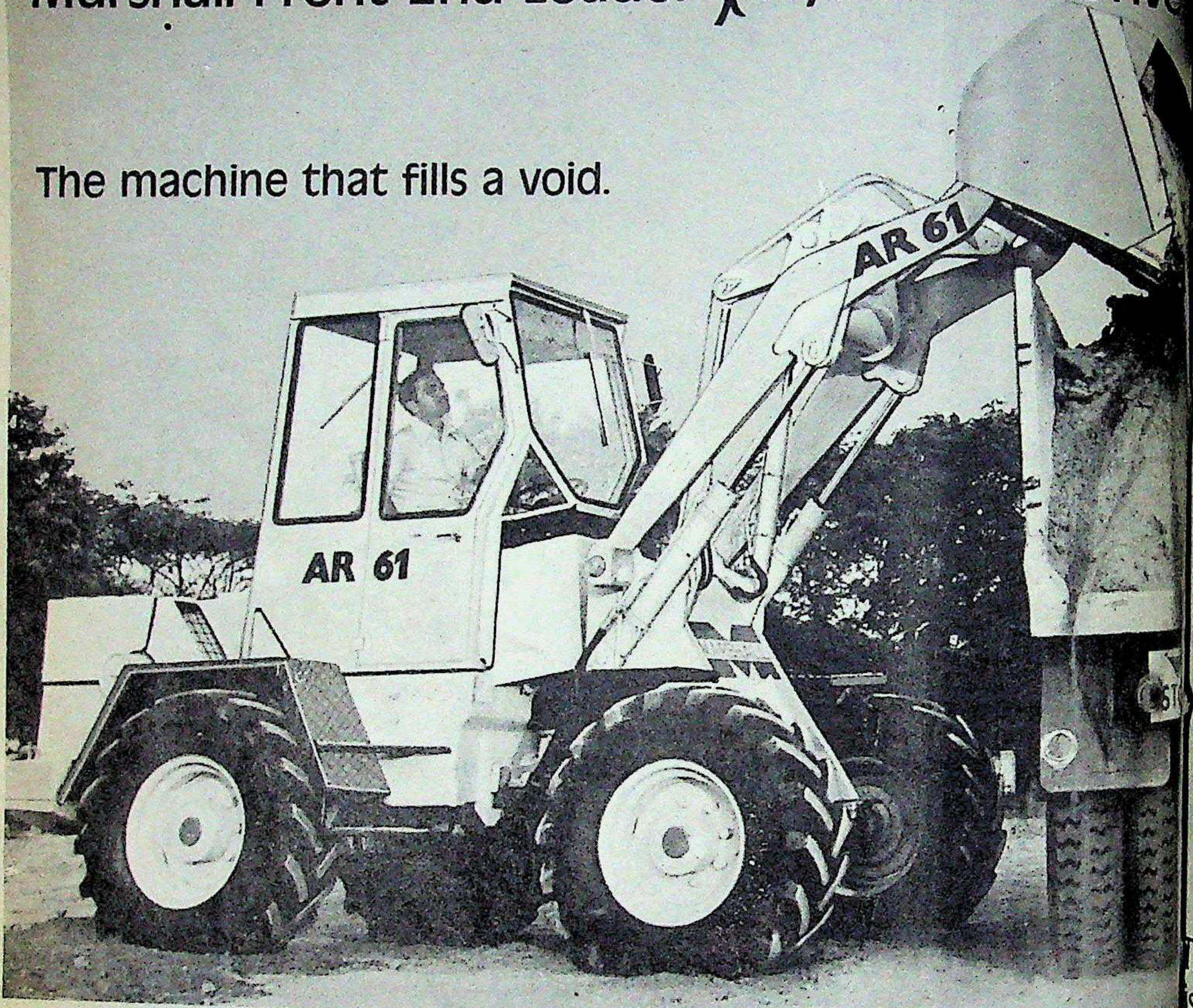

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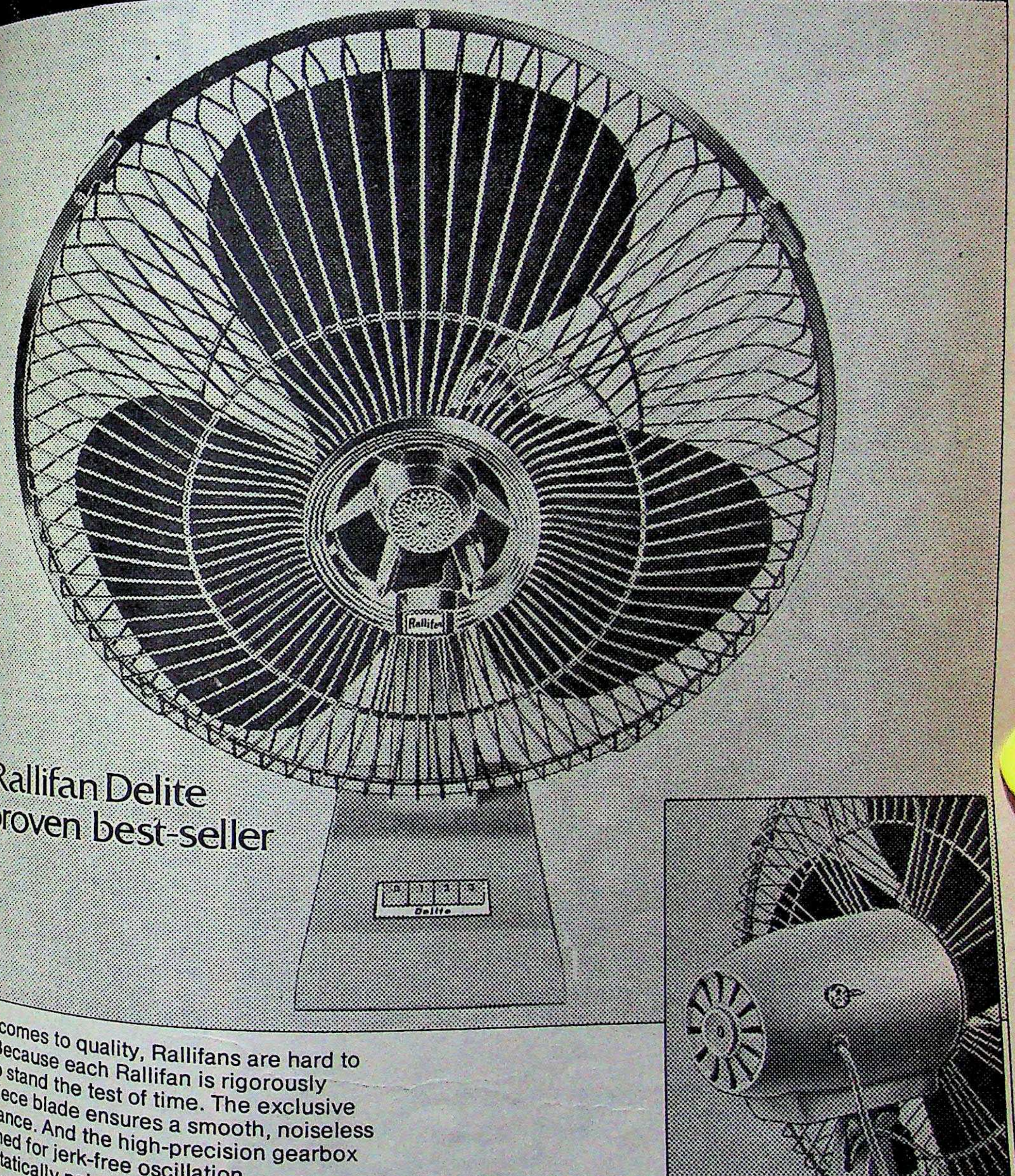

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MEENAKSHIPURAM

Keeping The Faith

PICTURES BY RAJ CHENGAPPA

Meenakshipuram has become a battleground of the faiths. Hindu zealots bent on regaining their lost prestige are trying to lure back their lost flock and Muslim fanatics are fighting to keep a hold on them.

Police out post at Meenakshipuram: battle of attrition

EXACTLY two years afte of conversions of Harija in Tamil Nadu the tiny Meenakshipuram has battleground of the faiths. Hin bent on regaining their lost p trying to lure back their lost Muslim fanatics are fighting to k on them.

The battle of attrition is perf bolised by the loudspeaker war Meenakshipuram, or Rahmatna new converts prefer to call it. Th have built a temporary mosque and of Allah is broadcast for five m dawn and at dusk. Not to be o Arya Samaj which has taken upo task of stemming the tide of conve refurbished the dilapidated temple and has hired a priest to gayatri mantra, a Vedic hymn, f day. Currently, however, the ern supply in the state has dampened of both sides.

Vigorous Drive: The Arya been particularly active in Meena and has been carrying out a vigor version drive. Every Monday, M. wamy, who heads its newly branch in Madurai, visits Meena 160 km away and converts those to rejoin the fold. But so far, claims to have reconverted 30 fam 200 that walked over to Islam o 19, 1981, it seems to be only a game" initially practised so succ the South Indian Isthanual Islam Says K.S. Anantharam Seshan, presentative of the Samaj staying Panpoli village: "The return has steady trickle. There has been no version as yet." He adds hopeful time goes and media glare subs get them all back."

The tragedy in Meenakship Samaj is uncomfortably realising gion has become a commodity fo classic instance is 50-year-ol Muthuswamy, who two months verted to Hinduism along with three children. Subbiah became five years ago when the local chu cottah helped him after he lost while working in the fields.

When the mass conversions shipuram took place he became cause, "the whole village was d reover, he claims that he was 3,000 by Muslim leaders. Sub that he did not know what the tenets were and he refused to undergo cir- on or pray in the mosque. His only ion was that he would wear a cap and his name to Sulaiman. Only six later Subbiah went back to Christianity because he found that, "there was nothing a Muslim for me."

he soon became disillusioned with ity. Two months ago Subbiah rted to Hinduism with the Samaj's e turned to K. Sivanu. The Harijan who was one of the few to have to change their religion in the and said: "I will get you four more s to reconvert if you give me Rs 2,000 r them."

impressive Success: Equally unive are the other reconversions by the Samaj. Twenty-six-year-old er, a Christian-Hindu convert, who mall shop in the village, changed his to seek equality" during the wave of sions and became Mohammed Yusuf. father Sundaraj was upset by his and refused to allow him to take part family affairs" so two months ago he self reconverted. R. Arunachalam, d not want to speak about why he got reconverted, is another example. revealed that Arunachalam's brois a doctor in the United Kingdom, ack and threatened not to return ill he changed his faith again. So m got back another prodigal son: Arunachalam was reconverted by the Samaj a year ago.

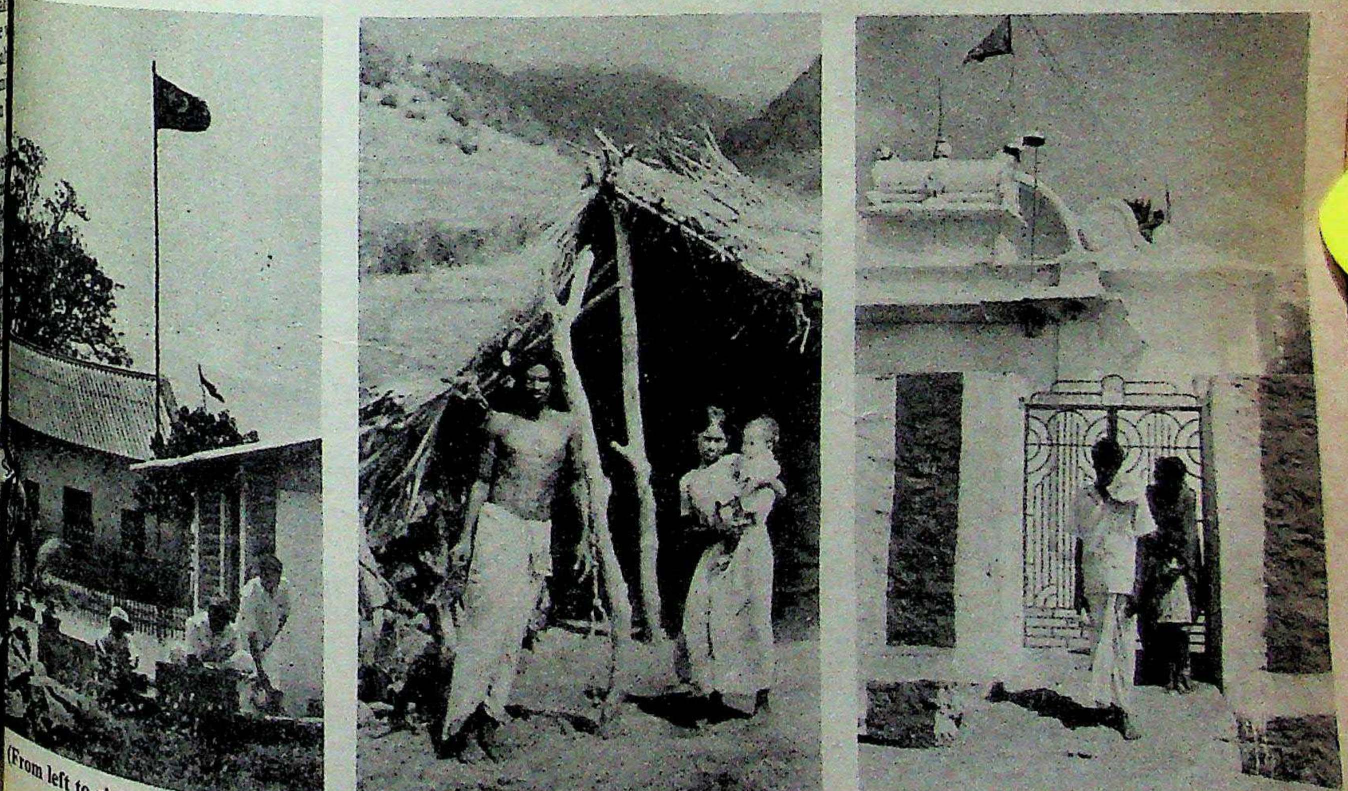
Perhaps the most interesting case is that of 45-year-old Adinamatalhai Madaswamy. Madaswamy switched religion and became Sadiq Ali when found that police harassment of Harijans in the village had increased and Muslim leaders promised he would be safe if he joined them. After two months he was reconverted by the Samaj because he realised as a Muslim he would lose all the Government benefits such as scholarships, reservations and loans for his two children. Says Madaswamy: "I made a blunder by changing my religion. Now I am not bothered about religion at all. I just go to work, eat and then sleep and I am fully satisfied."

Equality or the lack of it does not appear to have been the reason for any reconversions. Money is the main factor. Armugham, a wizened self-proclaimed leader of the reconverts complained: "I got four Muslim families converted to Hindus but nobody gave me anything." In fact though Hindus organised a society called the Suttuvattara Hindu Samudaya Valarchi Manram to prevent further conversions hardly a third of the 500 members are Harijans, mainly because their is not much money. Complaints Sivanu: "Whenever we tried to get a Harijan into the executive council they would ask how much more can you give us than the Muslims?"

New Strategies: The Samaj, has now realised that it has to find other ways to woo back the converts. It has now started a small school, where 20 Harijan children study, and plans to construct a bigger school costing Rs 1 lakh. It plans to establish a mandir to hold religious discussions and it also gives the villagers cash to help celebrate festivals. On December 31 last year it displayed its might when it organised a three-day Arya Maha Sammelan attended by 1,000 delegates. Every day processions chanting Vedic hymns were taken through the village with its saffron flag imprinted with a symbol of *Om* held aloft. The Islamic Society protested against the Samaj holding its conference on the grounds that it would "disturb communal harmony" but the Tamil Nadu Government turned down the objection.

Despite the Hindu onslaught most converts are still happy to take shelter under the crescent of Islam. One of the leaders M.A. Jabarlahal formerly Jabbaini says: "The figure given about reconversions is a fraud. Nobody has changed their religion again. We are all happy being Muslims." Jabarlahal claims that 375 of them have already undergone circumcision. Another Harijan convert Abdul Jaleel formerly Devadass says that being a Muslim gives them an equality which they were seeking. But relationships between the neo-Muslims and the Hindus are still strained and there is open hostility between the leaders.

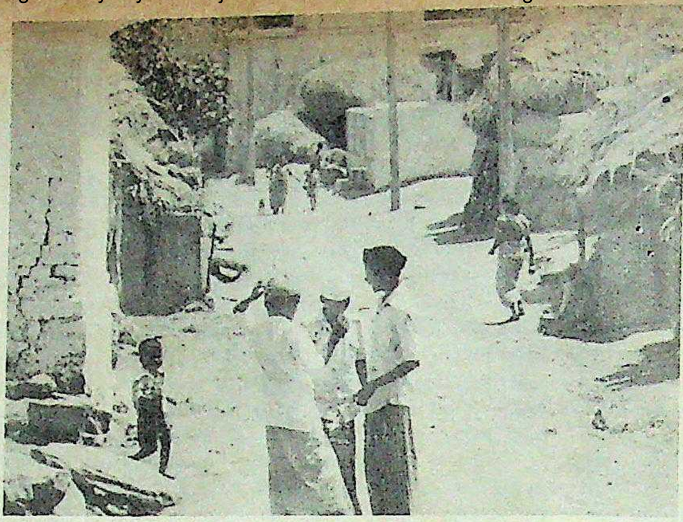
One bone of contention between the two groups is a mosque that is being built in the village. The Hindus claim that the



(From left to right) Meenakshipuram's mosque; Subbiah; and Madaswamy outside the Arya Samaj temple: religious rivalry

mosque is on village common land and have gone to the district court and got a stay. The Muslims first put up a thatched structure and when it was burnt down in June last during the wave of communal riots (INDIA TODAY, July 15, 1982) in nearby Pulianguid village they built another—the new structure, prudently, had one with an asbestos roof.

The dispute is yet to be settled by the court but Jabarlahal says they now plan to build a big mosque in the village. However, attendance at a mosque has thinned considerably, and last fortnight hardly 50 neo-Muslims came for the prayers on Friday which Jabarlahal explained saying that as it was the harvest season most of them had gone to work.



New Muslim converts on a Meenakshipuram street

Less Harassment: But the real issues that caused the conversions such as police harassment and discrimination by caste Hindus have receded into the background. A double murder case, in which two bodies were fished out from a nearby river, linked to simultaneous discovery of a counterfeit note making machine and the police atrocities that followed on the Harijan suspects involved in these cases was one of the main reasons that led to the conversions almost two years ago. But the case is still pending with the district sessions court in Tirunelveli and the 11 accused are out on bail. The Hindus in the region maint had never ever Harijans badly and incidents cited by Muslims before co curred elsewhere an be corroborated.

Meanwhile Government has be watchful eye on the has set up a pol manned by a sub-in constables and fou the Tamil Nadu Sp The outpost keep every visitors to the the deputy superin police is always kep about the law and tion. But their effort be wasted as it is decides more than else. Admits K. Masalamani, Madurai Arya Samaj: "Non Meenakshipuram residents seem cerned with the philosophy of They can be wooed over by mo side and wooed back the same

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in M

GURUVAYUR

Damp Squib

FIFTY years after the Sree Krishna Temple at Guruvayur in the Trichur district of Kerala pioneered the temple entry satyagraha which was to enable Harijans to lawfully worship in all temples along with socially higher groups, social discrimination continues in subtle forms. Last fortnight, the *namaskara puja*, the special monthly feeding of Brahmins in the *Oottupura* (dining hall) inside the temple, survived a half-hearted protest led by the Kerala Harijan Federation (KHF). The age-old custom is protected by Section 35 of the Guruvayur Devaswom Act, 1978, which recognises the *tantri* as the final authority in religious matters.

Brahmins being fed during *namaskara puja*: discriminatory practice

The controversy was sparked off by the recent unsuccessful attempt by octogenarian Brahmin Swami Anandatheertha, the biggest Harijan crusader in Kerala, to gatecrash into the ceremony without wearing his sacred thread—a hallmark of his caste. Amidst widespread reaction at the alleged 'manhandling' of Anandatheertha by temple guards, KHF President Kallara Sukumaran along with 100 other Harijans, commenced a 370 km *padayatra* from the Sree Padmanabha Temple in Trivandrum, intending to storm the Guruvayur *namaskara puja* on February 13.

It was, however, symptomatic of the depths to which the entire episode plummeted, that M.K. Kunhol, vice-president of the very Vishal Hindu Sammelan (VHS) which had accorded red carpet welcomes to the agitators, sought to malign Sukumaran and his KHF as an organisation of Christian converts. Said Kunhol, who resigned in protest against the VHS's attitude: "I have evidence to prove that Sukumaran was baptised as a Christian and his real name is Kallara Markose."

Demeaning Gesture: Surprisingly, Sukumaran chose to accede to the Guruvayur Devaswom authorities' d for a signed declaration certifyi both he and his followers were Hindus, a few hours before the into the temple. Ironically adop same ossified terms of reference was meant to be protesting against maran said: "Kunhol had sold his the Guruvayur Devaswom by try frame me on false ch

On the day of the much-mellowed Suk announced: "Our at only to bring about a in the attitude of the authorities who have sed to see whether rules can be ame

Enacting a par the protest, Sukumar took of a friendly feast with a sprinkling of Brahmins and jans in the newly constructed wing temple with Chief Minister Karun paying court. A smiling Karun announced that given current la Government could not interfere w lucrative temple ritual, which gr 790 per interested devotee, and for all tickets for the current year hav already been sold out. Meanwh controversial puja was cond usual.

—SREEDHAR

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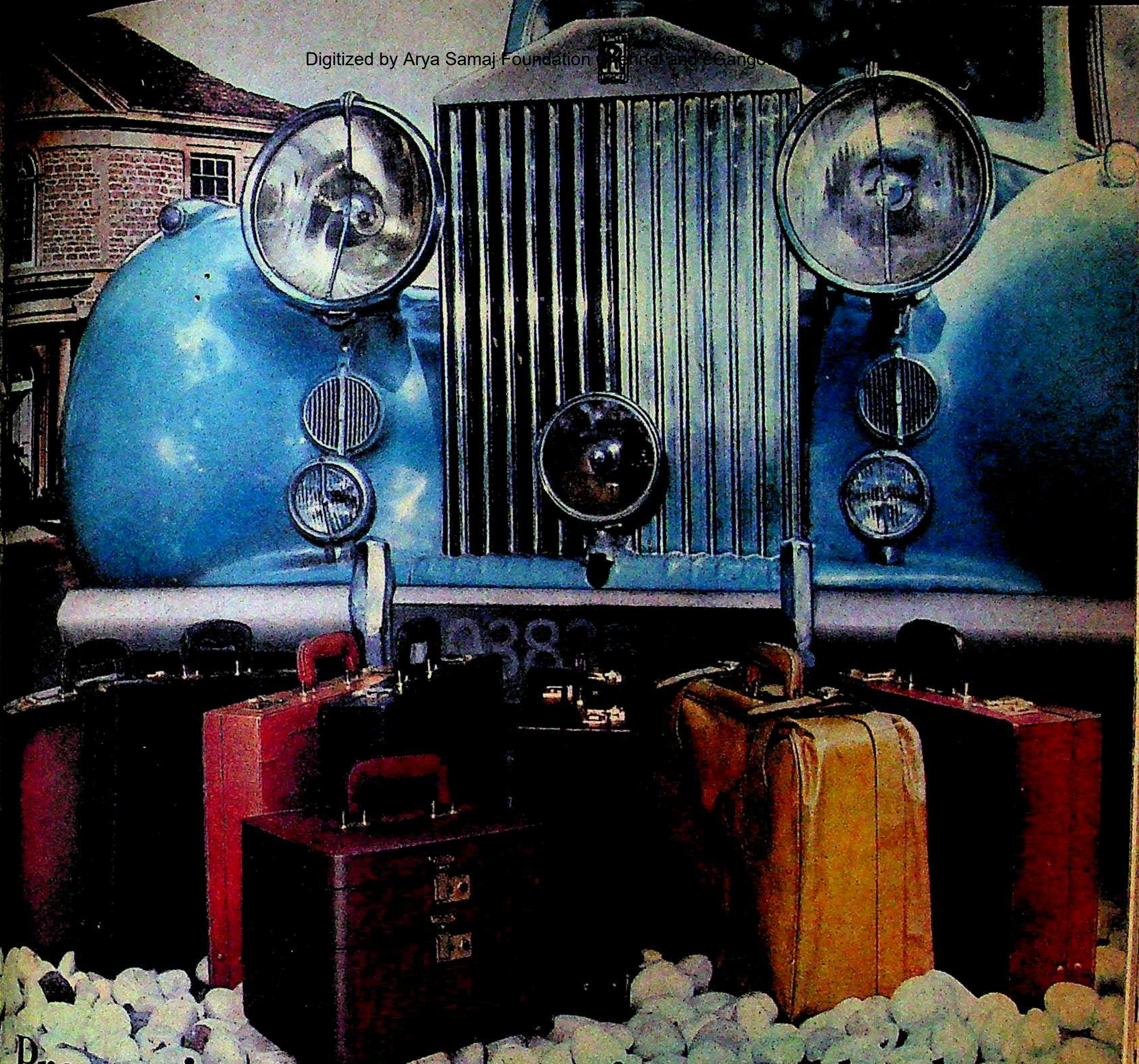

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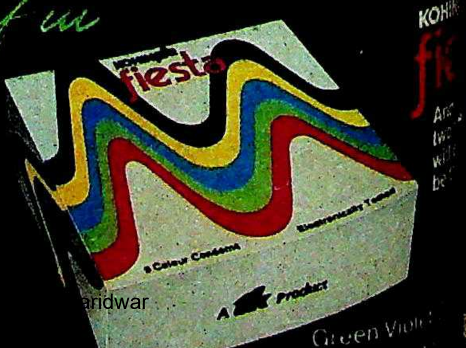
It was Wednesday. I felt like the cat's whiskers. I had said all the right things and done all t right things all day. Green I decided. And could see the glint of mischief in my eyes. Envy-of-them-all-green for Mr. Cat's Whiskers.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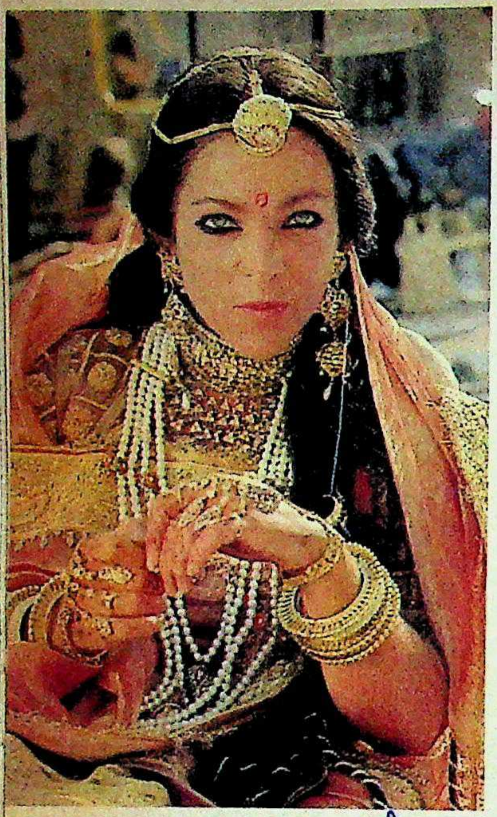

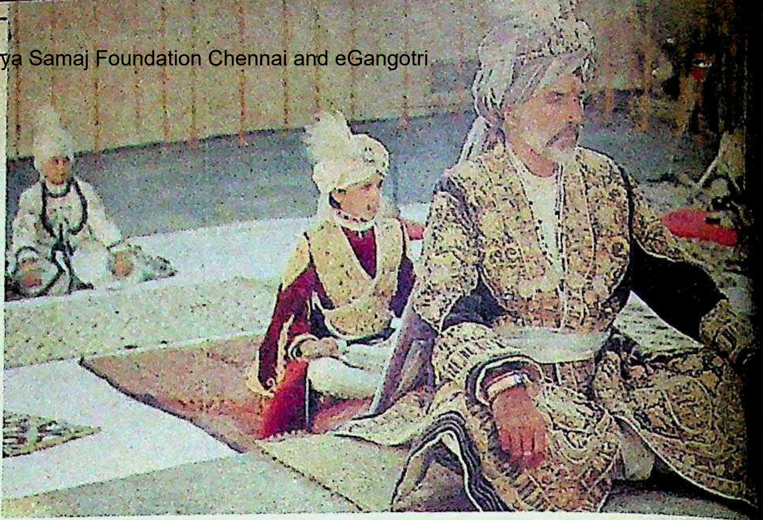

(Clockwise from above) Amy Irving as Princess Anjuli; Christopher Lee as her uncle, Kakaji; Ben Cross (in uniform) as Ashton and Rossano Brazzi as the greedy Rana of Bhitor: sweeping canvas

PAVILIONS

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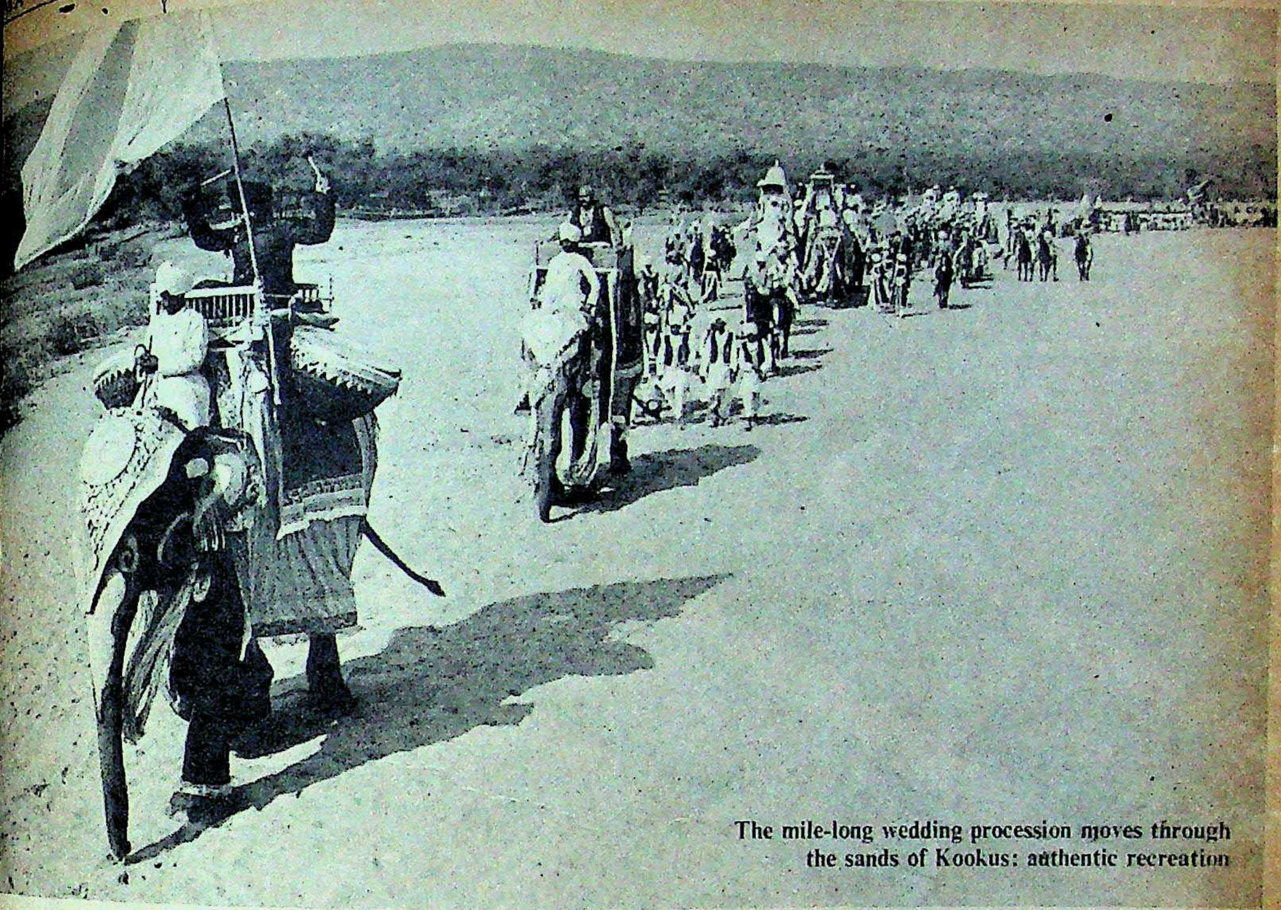

The mile-long wedding procession moves through the sands of Kookus: authentic recreation

PAVILIONS

lming A Fantasy

HE LAST time a wedding processon of such magnitude passed hrough the imposing high gates of he Pink City Palace gates of Jaipur ably during the middle 18th centuty fully caprisoned elephants, 30 20 bullocks, 80 horses, herds of sheep and cows and a thousand ed in crimson and white courtiers' broidered in gold and silver, with pped by crisp colourful turbans ross the sands of Kookus to finally City Palace gates. The only incone that was sounded was a threerld screamed out by a jean-clad, —"Cut".

thentic as it might have seemed, ible scene was being re-enacted for we-struck residents as part of the M.M. Kaye's international best l *The Far Pavilions*. The 960-page pted for the screen by screen-wri Bond, is a passionate love story set e spectacular epic sweep of battle, and intrigue in late 19th century ing the British Raj.

The screen rights for *The Far Pavilions* were eagerly sought by a host of producers from Hollywood to London but Kaye, who published the book in 1978, guarded the rights jealously and in 1979 sold the rights to a British Producer Geoff Reeve. Reeve got the British company Goldcrest Films, who have produced *Gandhi*, to back the $12 million (Rs 11.4 crore) production of three two-hour episodes for cable television in America. For Britain it was also a triumph: it is the first time that a British-produced mini-series has been pre-sold to cable television in US. A theatrical version of the film is also being shot simultaneously for which Bond has written additional scenes and expanded others to make the film stand on its own right.

Shooting Schedule: Shooting over an expanse of 94 locations, mostly in India, *The Far Pavilions* unit, consisting of 64 actors, 57 European technicians, 85 Indian production staff and 500 extras, is being directed by Peter Duffel, who has directed films like *England Made Me* and *Inside Out*. Started on January 10, shooting will continue till the end of March taking the crew from Jaipur to Delhi and maybe finally to Kashmir. The film and Television version of the epic will only hit the screen at the end of the year with a possibility of it being dubbed in Hindi for all-India release.

With a fabulous cast among whom are Egyptian actor-heart-throb Omar Sharif, Ben Cross of *Chariots Of Fire* fame, Sir John Gielgud, Christopher Lee, Rossano Brazzi, Amy Irving, Saeed Jaffrey, Jennifer Kapoor and a host of other British and Indian actors, the film is designed to show India as it has never been seen before on film—the splendour of the autocratic princely states, the life of the British Raj, a slice of the history of the elite Corps of Guides, all clothed in elaborate rich costumes of the day set against the vast ornate palaces of the rajas and maharajas of 19th century India. "But," as Reeve says, "the kernel of the film will be the love story of Ash (the principal character) and Anjuli, an Indian princess, set against this vast and colourful canvas. It is this fantasy that is our selling point." And for India, after the tumultuous success of *Gandhi*, *The Far Pavilions* is sure to inspire a host of other film

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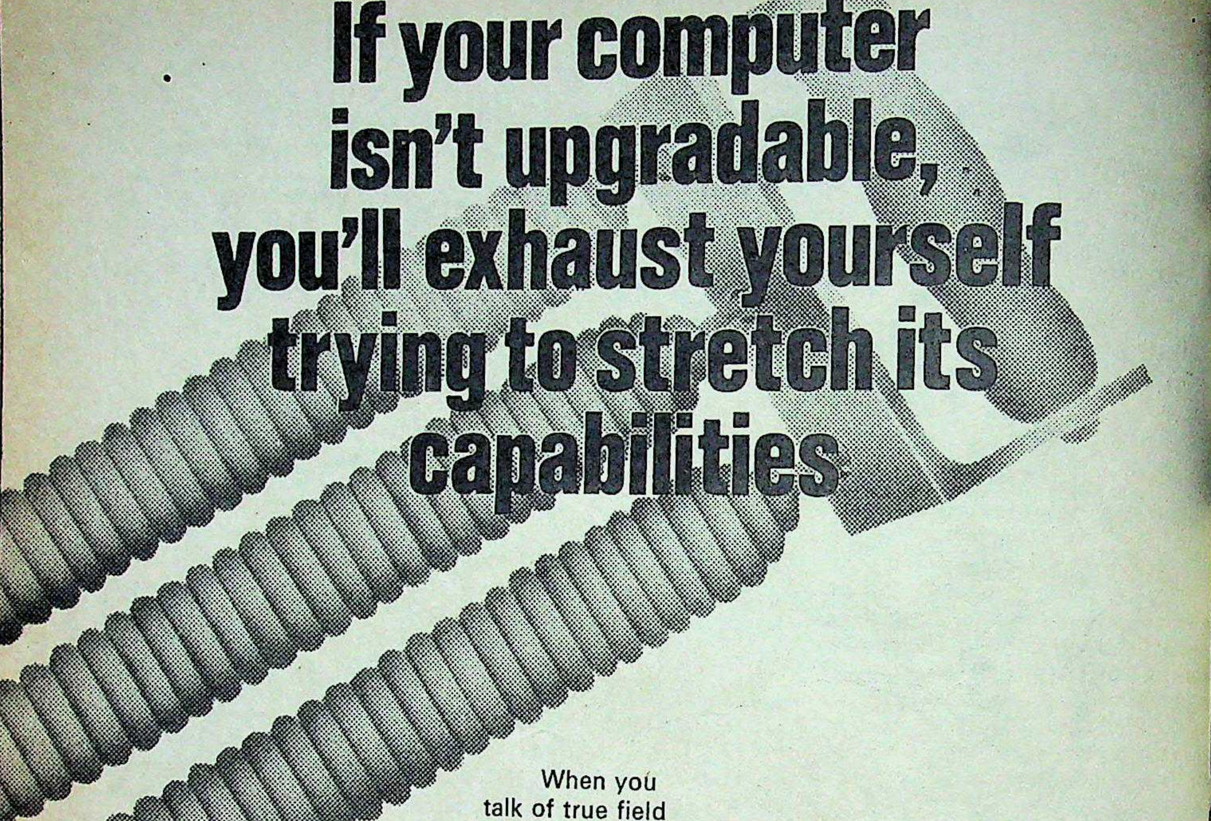

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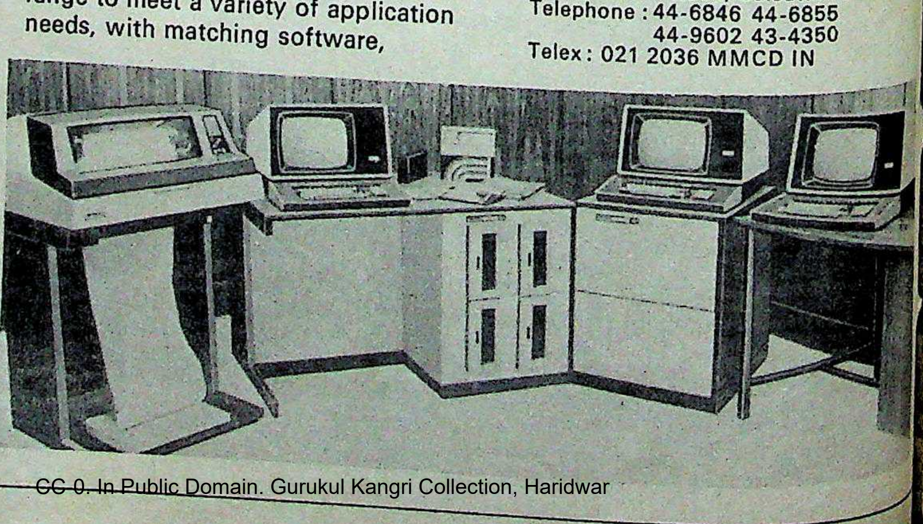

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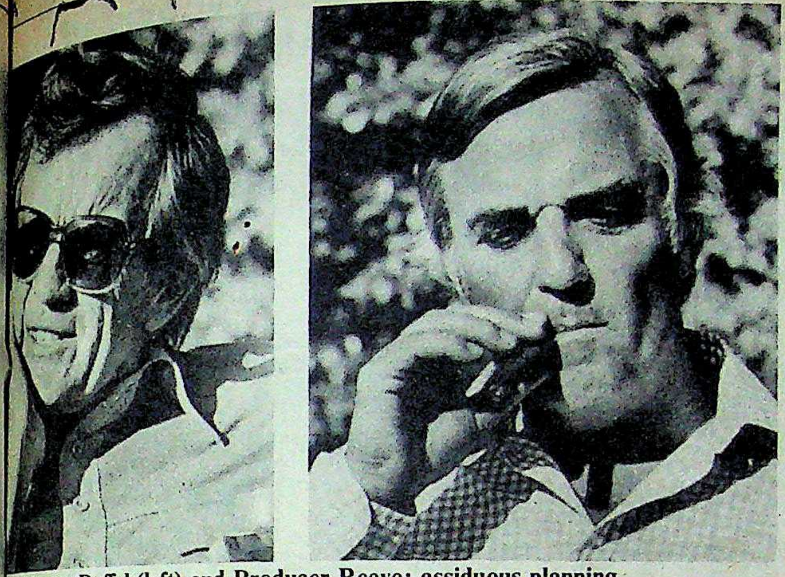

Director Duffel (left) and Producer Reeve: assiduous planning

use this country as a major

eve, the mounting of this project a personal triumph. He'd been make a film in India and Kaye an opportunity. He worked out es with Goldcrest and with the g sold nearly 10 million copies, he nce to pre-sell the film to Home n the US—the largest paying TV n the world. Said Jane Deknatel, esident in charge of motion films ox Office: "This film is going to be hit. It is a great love story and Western viewer a glimpse of India probably never seen. Although most expensive film we have though the final amount has not d, it is estimated at half the budget e sure this is the kind of film our nt to see."

and his film unit have been planning the film for the last going through rigorous research present the viewer an authentic period. Their most daunting task emble the impressive array of hat were first priority for the film. d Raymond Hughes to recreate cent clothes of the 19th century a. Hughes resigned from his job me designer for BBC television g worked with them for 16 years his challenging job. Said Hughes: er done costumes of this kind on -scale before. It has really been a ck for me but at the same time I a great deal. The most amazing been working with colours and Hughes has been assigned a million pounds (Rs 40 lakh) for es out of which £8,000 (Rs 1.25 was spent on the gulband worn by Amy Irving, who plays the lead role of princess Anjuli. Said Irving, who made her cinematic debut in *Carrie*, which won her considerable applause and which she followed by performance in *Fury*, *The Competition* and recently in *Yentl*: "Just dressing like a princess has made me feel and think like one. After this experience I am going to feel more Indian than American."

Authentic Touch: The effort that had been directed towards injecting as much authenticity as possible to each and every frame of the film was evident while shooting progressed. In the heart of the City Palace at Jaipur in the Peacock quadrangle, jean-clad set directors and their assistants bustled about putting the finishing touches to a marigold-draped wedding pandal, while saffron robed pundits (picked up from local temples) chanted *mantras* which rang through the high-walled courtyard of the palace. The scene: the wedding ceremony of the Rana of Bhitor (Rossano Brazzi) and Princess Anjuli. The religious scene was followed by one at the Diwan-i-Am, next door, where in the midst of opulent sets and paan-chewing courtiers, the Rana was being entertained by nautch girls to the strains of court singers and musicians all picked locally.

For most of the top actors and actresses, working in India for *The Far Pavilions* which offers all the ingredients of a commercial pot-boiler, has been a new experience. Said Sharif, who achieved international fame through the block-buster *Dr Zhivago*: "I hadn't seen India at all. The film has offered me the opportunity to see it, and I am really glad I decided to come. But besides that I needed the money." Ben Cross, who won accolades for his role in the *Chariots Of Fire* seemed all enthusiasm to get into the role of Ash for the film. Said he: "The character of Ash in the film is very complicated—an Englishman born in India and raised by a Hindu woman. I am still working out the role, but it seems exciting all the same. It is almost like working in a Hindi film. Actually I'd love to act in a Hindi film soon. It looks like fun."

The Far Pavilions when released will come at a time when Western movie-going audiences are seeking entertainment as a relief from the drudgery of living in a world of growing recession, and more and more film makers are putting their money into films of pure fantasy and romance (an indication of which is the phenomenal success of Steven Spielberg's *E.T.*). Says Director Peter Duffel of *The Far Pavilions*: "The film when made is going to be a sleeper. It has a *Gone With The Wind* kind of story and that's how it'll survive. It is a film that everybody will want to see over and over again for years to come." Duffel's optimism was seconded by actor Christopher Lee: "I have made films which consisted of a lot of violence and gore. But very few of those films if made now, sell. People are starved of magic on the screen and now that is what sells most and *The Far Pavilions* does not only offer that but adventure as well. It's a sure-seller."

The Far Pavilions novel which was described by *The Times* London as a "rip-roaring, heart-tugging, flag-flying, hair-raising, hoof-beating" story conjuring up the very essence of India is destined to be just that in it's film version. It is about an English boy Ashton Pelham-Martyn, brought up by a Hindu mother, who, in his childhood, while serving the Raja of Gulkote, discovers a cluster of mountain peaks known as the Dur Khaima—*The Far Pavilions* and vows that one day he will reach them. And in between he leaves the palace, goes to England, comes back to India as an officer of the elite Corps of Guides and falls in love with Anjuli (the Maharaja of Gulkote's daughter and Ash's childhood friend). Anjuli, however, is to be married to the Rana of Bhitor, a decadent old man, interested only in acquiring large bride prices. Ash unsuccessfully begs Anjuli not to marry the Rana, and after many intriguing and emotional episodes during which Rana dies. he helps her escape.

The plot smells of any Hindi formula film but promises to be different. For Kaye; who was born in India and spent most of her early childhood and much of her married life here; the filming of her novel proved an emotional experience. Said the petite and bespectacled author: "If history repeats itself; then I am seeing it repeat now under my very eyes." And for most of the members of the crew; including the producer; it has been a labour of love—a love and an interest in India which for most of the cinema-viewing world still remains a mystical and magical land.

—ANITA KAUL in Jaipur

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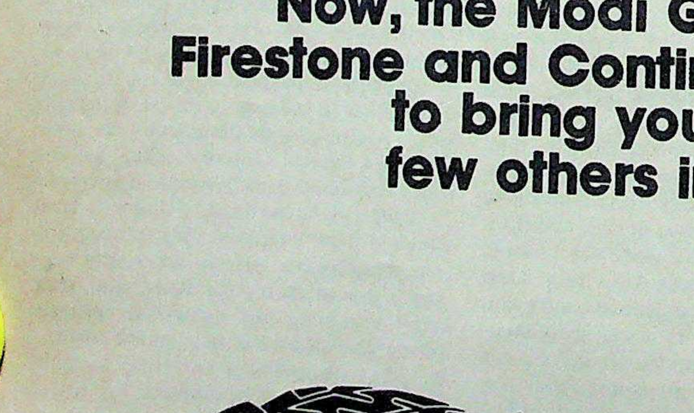

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od For Thought

PORARY PAKISTAN: New
Images
troduced by PRAN CHOPRA
5; Pages: 184

IT IS probably the most complex and paradoxical relationship in the history of nations. It is also, and not just probably, the most tragic. Russia and America's antagonistic relationship is psychologically and ideologically logical. That of India and Pakistan is not. ations are as closely entrapped in f history than the two currently Mrs Indira Gandhi and General q. No two peoples are so alike, ly flawed and gifted, so pre- rom the same broadcloth. And relationship whose history has n blood from the time of its three decades ago.

years, the complexity of that p and the minds of its archi- been stripped to the bone by writers, journalists, defence iplomats et al. The three wars ighbours have fought have ed to death by the people who m and the people who didn't. dia on both sides of the border, concerning the two is not just ont-page news, whether it is a erturns in Larkana or pictures of beggar in Baroda.

Subject: The passionate nature of nship has never ebbed, never sta- ashmir issue, the no-war pact, the eement, Zia's Islamisation, the Gandhi and Brezhnev, Zia and e subjects that can be, and fre- , resurrected and exhumed over gain and at the slightest provoca- n is probably why the appearance rary *Pakistan: New Aims and* e bookstalls contains a powerful able element of *deja vu*.

by Pran Chopra, former editor esman and currently visiting pro- tre for Policy Research in New *emporary Pakistan* is a collection y published articles by a smatte- olars and journalists. The title, slightly misleading. There is no- bout the aims and images except the manner of the individual writing. There is nothing here that has not been written about and discussed before, nothing that provides new or startling insights into the puzzling mosaic of the Indo-Pakistan relationship.

The book's significance is purely confined to one and only one aspect, and that is that the authors of the various chapters are recognised, not just as Pakistan-watchers but in their individual fields. Thus, whatever their views on Pakistan, they are, and should be, taken more seriously than most. But there is also a danger in that which is immediately recognised as the first major flaw in the book: the uniformity of their opinions and impressions. It could be, if one were somehow unaware of it, a book authored by one person instead of a collection of articles by diverse commentators.

Similar Class: That, ironically, is also the danger in the public attitude and opinion being moulded on both sides of the border. All the people featured here, as it would be were the book published in Pakistan, belong to the same circle, have access to the same information and meet largely the same people when they travel across the border. Any general debate and open discussion on Pakistan will have at the speaker's podium at least nine out of the 10 featured in the book. Consequently, whether knowingly or unknowingly, their perceptions seem to follow the same path.

Narasimha Rao and Agha Shahi: hot and cold

They are, however, perceptions that cannot be ignored for the serious student of the Indo-Pakistan relationship and its evolution. Pran Chopra, who has written the lengthy introduction, is a journalist of long standing whose views on Pakistan bear the stamp of authority. Bashiruddin Ahmed is professor and director, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi, whose articles appear frequently in the national press and whose opinions are eagerly sought. Bimal Prasad, professor, School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, is a specialist on South Asian studies as is associate professor Urmilla Phadnis. Bhabani Sen Gupta, currently research professor, Centre for Policy Research, Ajit Bhattacharjea, former editor of the *Indian Express*, Inder Jit, political columnist and editor of India News and Features Alliance (INFA), Salamat Ali, correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and Rajendra Sareen, editor of *Public Opinion Trends* (POT), are all names that need no introduction, especially when it comes to issues concerning Pakistan.

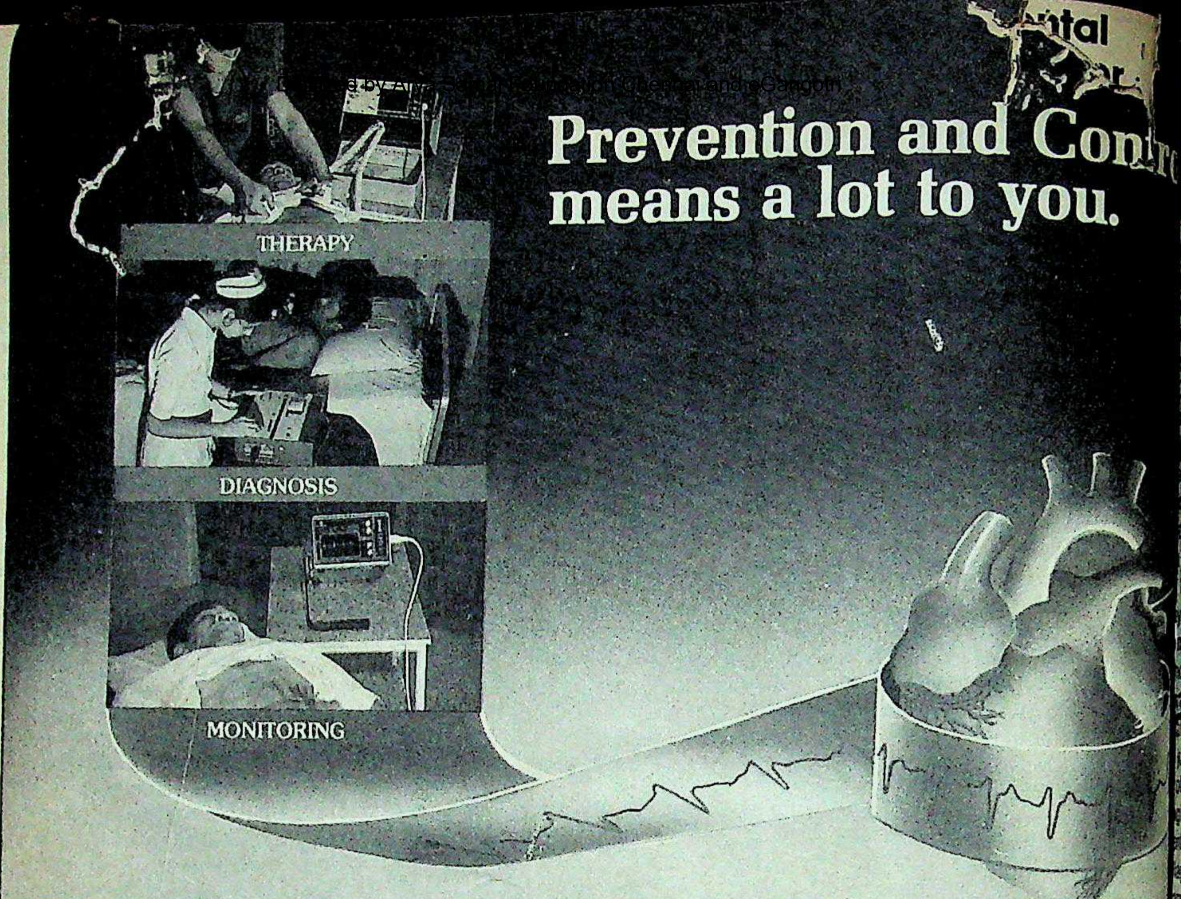
Little Dissension: In individual terms, their contributions to this book are forcefully written and their experiences in Pakistan painted in vivid colours. There is, however, very little dissension on points of view. All experienced the same spontaneous affection and desire for peace among the Pakistani people that most Indian visitors come across. All agree that it is the deep-rooted mutual mistrust and the personal political aims of the respective leaderships that bedevil the relationship and reduce an issue like the no-war pact to nit-picking. Pakistanis are envious of India's industrial and technological advances and Indians are envious of the surface prosperity of their Pakistani counterparts.

In other words, the book merely retraces ground that has been trod wearily before. But in the uniformity, there is a subtle but stark message that does manage to come across to the reader: that the desire for peace and amity with India among the people of Pakistan is too widespread and genuine for it to be ignored any longer by either of the two countries, and that the no-war pact is too serious an issue to be muddied by the hard-headedness and historical suspicion that pervades South Block or the Foreign Office in Islamabad.

Military Aspect: Apart from the uniformity, there is one other major flaw in a book of this nature: the military angle. The fact that Pakistan is ruled by the military elite and that India's defence strategy and defence purchases are totally governed by its obsession with Pakistan make it an essential ingredient in any discussions on Pakistan.

Indian generals and even the lesser ranks are no less obsessed with Pakistan than Indian rulers and diplomats. Since it is their fingers that will pull the triggers, the book would have been more relevant if there was a contribution by a defence expert or analyst between its covers. But it is still a valuable addition to any library, personal or public, and the collective voice of its illustrious contributors offers food for extensive thought, even if it is a meal that one has tasted before.

—DILIP BOBB



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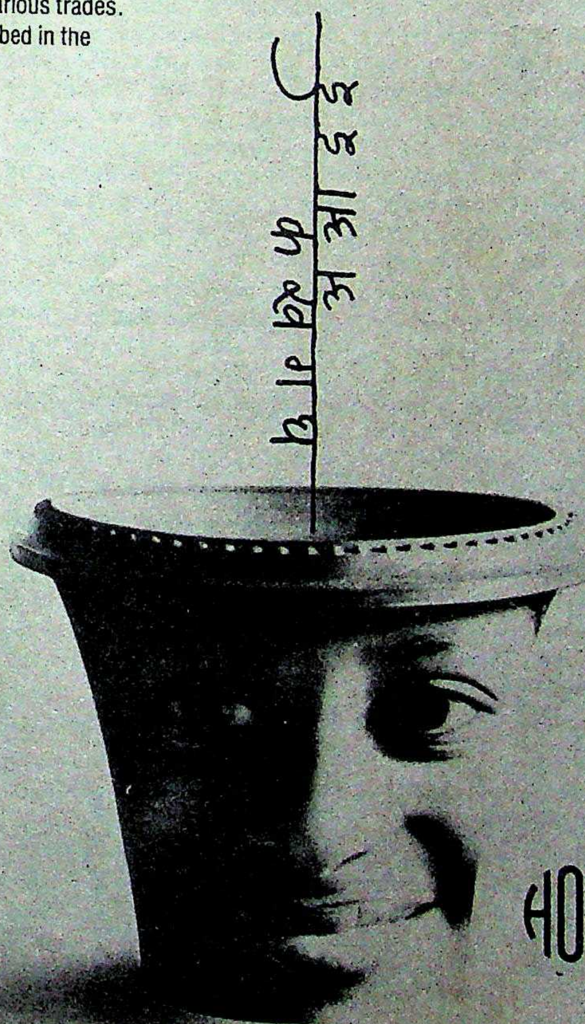

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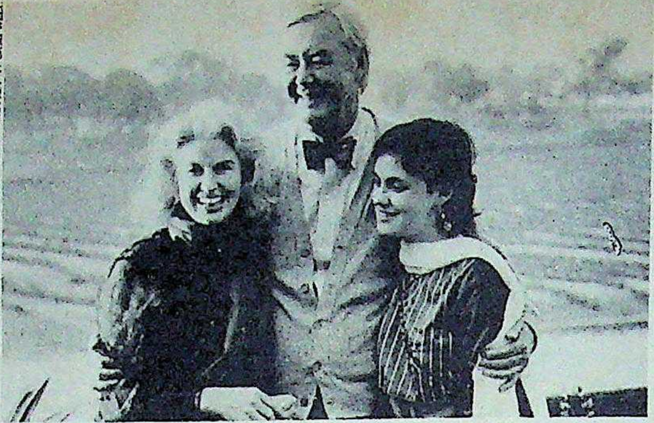
■ Through thick and thin the invincible duo have been together braving the brickbats of the press and bouquets of their well-wishers and fans. It's been a long yet fruitful climb up the ladder of success for the India-born **Ismail Merchant** and **James Ivory**, producers of *Heat and Dust*, which was entirely shot in India last summer and is running to tumultuous acclaim in London. Both Merchant and Ivory and their supportive script-writer, Booker prize-winner **Ruth Prawar Jhabvala**, were in India last fortnight on the eve of celebrating their 21 years together in the film production business. Merchant and Ivory started their fruitful career way back in the 1962 with the *Householder* and since then the two have stuck together even when things around them have fallen apart. But they have had the perseverance to get it all together again. And last January Britain's National Film Theatre showed 21 films, including documentaries of the two as a mark of appreciation and respect. For Merchant India has always been a place he associates with strongly. Says Merchant: "We have been slogging hard for the last 21 years and the success of *Heat and Dust* in London is a reward for our efforts. .at last."

Merchant (left) and Ivory: durable duo

■ It was a Valentine for Babur. And it came from Washington D.C., from the wife of New York's Democrat Senator and former Ambassador to India, **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**. To celebrate the 500th birth anniversary of the founder of India's Mughal dynasty, Babur, on February 14, **Elizabeth Moynihan** with a party of family including her daughter, *New York Post* reporter Maura and friends travelled to Arambagh, one of the gardens the great emperor (1483-1530) founded on the river bank outside Agra. Devoting the day's excursion to elaborate feasting, music and song—a Kathak dancer came from Delhi and nautch girls from Bombay—Senator Moynihan proposed a toast "to the other man in my wife's life". For Mrs Moynihan, the obsession with Babur began, when during her stay in Delhi, she followed the text of Babur's memoirs to relocate the remains of the emperor's gardens, the earliest of all Mughal monuments. Historians and archaeologists were staggered by her discoveries, which for centuries had lain buried under subsequent Mughal construction or sun-baked villages along the route of the Jamuna. Said a beaming Elizabeth after the day-long celebration: "He was the most interesting, fascinating, dynamic and stimulating of all the Mughals and it seems a pity to forget him when his garden architecture is still alive." Among the 40-odd Moynihan friends who joined them from all parts of the world were novelist Ruth Jhabvala and husband, wife of the American Ambassador Betsey Barnes and former Indian foreign secretary Jagat S. Mehta.



JEFFREY V. CAMPWELL

The Moynihans at Arambagh: reviving Babur

■ He calls her Ma and she calls him Vido but that's about all that **Draupatie Naipaul** will say about her famous son **V.S. Naipaul**. Mama Naipaul breezed into town last week looking every inch the formidable Trinidad matron she is and none the worse for wear for all her 70 years. This is her second trip to India—the first was in 1977 when she hired a taxi in Delhi to take her all the way to Gorakhpur from where her grandfather had gone to West Indies as a coolie. Did she think that Vidyadhar would one day become 'the world's finest living English writer?' "I wanted him to have a profession—medicine, law, anything, but I could see he was no

HARI OM GULATI

Naipaul: roots

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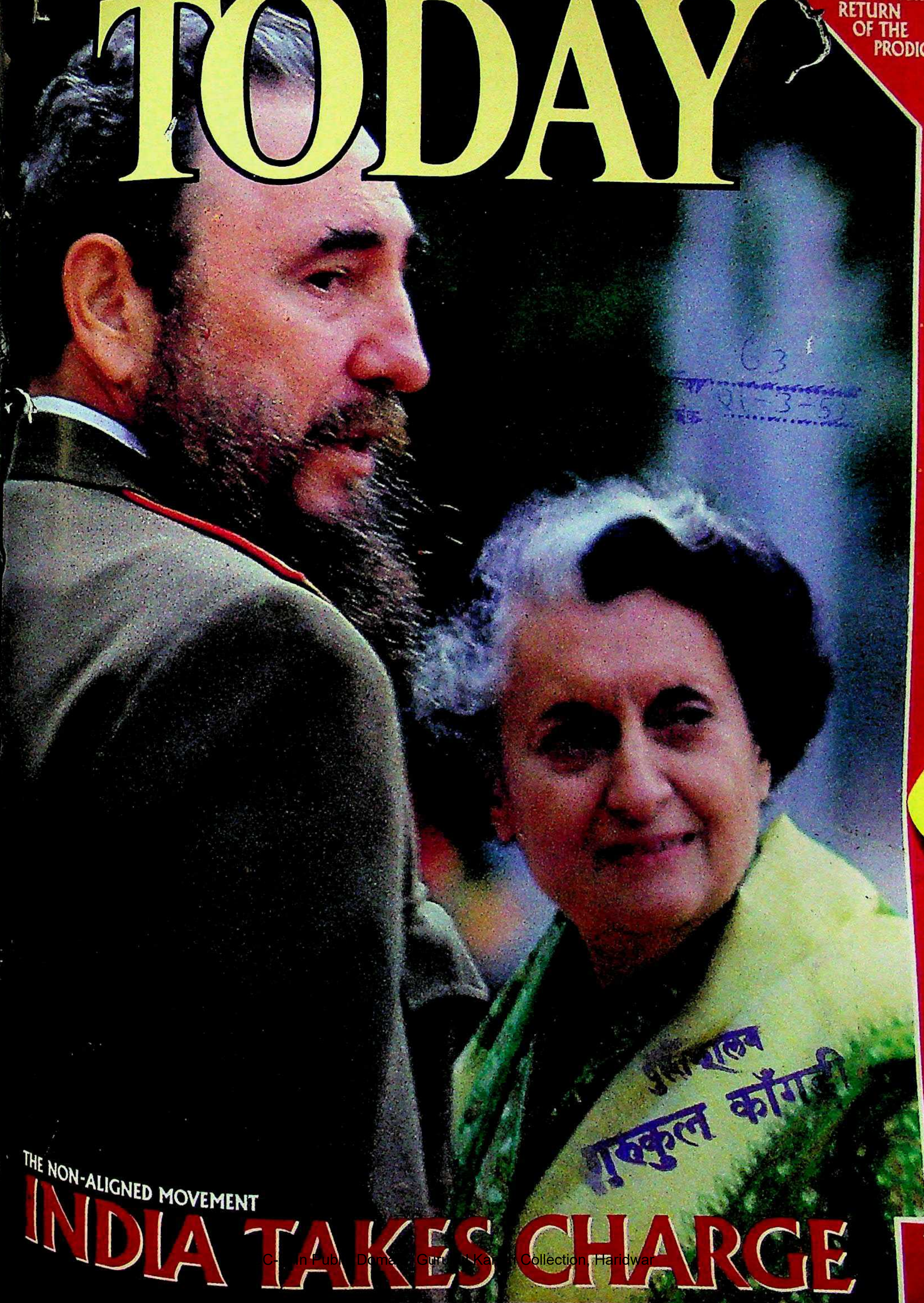

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

FIRST Asiad, now the Non-aligned summit. By any standards, Delhi has become a big meet city with the latest in facilities whether it is in trap shooting, television transmission or three-shift conferences that go on round the clock. All of which makes it a prime focus of media attention. Like Asiad, the NAM *summit drew more than 1,500 media men and women from all over the world, including India. But the very success of such gala events poses challenges which are new to the Indian media, and even by these new standards,* NAM *was something of an exception. With around 60 heads of state and government and another 40 high-level delegations, tight security cut off the participants from the media. The conference venue was by and large unapproachable and newsmen were mostly confined to the media centre. Contact with delegations was through an innovative electronic mail system through a temperamental computer which relayed requests for meetings to the appropriate persons and occasionally elicited a reply.*

The media centre at Vigyan Bhavan

Security apart, mammoth conferences present extraordinary challenges. There is usually so much happening simultaneously that the media has to plan its campaign almost as methodically as participating delegations if it is to do its job well. At NAM, *the focus of attention shifted with dizzying rapidity and it was often like making sense of an orchestra with different parts playing their own tunes all at once. Thus, even as the heads of state were making their speeches, obligingly transmitted on closed-circuit television to the media centre, their officials were hard at work bargaining over the finer points of consensus in closed committee rooms. Tracking key officials from the more active delegations sometimes meant foregoing short notice press conferences by delegations keen to have their viewpoint amplified. And when there was no mileage to be had from the shuttle diplomacy under way at the main conference centre, mediamen fell back on the exhaustive, entertaining and often illuminating briefings held several times a day by the indefatigable conference spokesman Mani Shankar Aiyar.*

For a magazine like INDIA TODAY, *the conference posed additional problems. Though not obliged to cover the deliberations on a day to day basis the magazine was nevertheless faced with the need to get beyond the enormous day to day attention paid to the conference in the print and broadcast media, to tell a different story with a longer perspective, to catch exclusive detail and yet go beyond it to encompass the broader meaning of last week's summit. In a word, to tell a well-covered story differently. That, essentially, is the function of a news periodical.*

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प्रा० दिनांक

INDIA TODAY
A STATE RAVAGED

ASSAM CARNAGE

It is surprising that after the tragedy of Assam ("A State Ravaged", March 15) you still thought you had a "choice" for the cover story. For me, and many others—journalists and apathetic officials included—the real magnitude of the tragedy must have been realised for the first time through Bhawan Singh's lenses. Reading the issue I saw India at its worst but journalism at its best.

Bombay *Jagdish R. Rattanani*

■ The Government's attitude to the Assam tragedy seems to echo Stalin's words: "A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic."

Hyderabad *N. Ramesh*

■ The cover convinced me that this issue will be banned but after I went through the article I felt that INDIA TODAY has unveiled nothing but the truth. The article also told me to what extent Doordarshan and AIR have hidden the facts.

Delhi *D.R. Gulati*

■ Given an option I think I would prefer to live in Idi Amin's Uganda than Indira Gandhi's Assam.

Madras *H. Mohamed Jan*

■ The prime minister cannot hide behind the Constitution and say that she was bound to hold these elections. If this is so, it was her duty to protect the electorate.

Damunda *Harjinder Singh*

■ The tragedy of Assam is the tragedy of vaulting ambition—the Centre wanted power, at any price.

Allahabad *R.A. Rajeev*

■ I am writing to register my protest against the use of the gruesome photographs of the Assam violence. The photos evoked such horror that I think it is about time that a little self-censorship was exercised.

Ludhiana *Mandeep Kaur*

■ The photographs of the carnage conveyed the price Assam had to pay for elections.

Tirunelveli *K. Baskar*

MISLEADING IMAGE

Madras is dying of thirst, Assam is in flames, Punjab is threatened by the Khalistan menace, Calcutta is a skeleton of its former grandeur and Bombay is textileless. Delhi, at the heart, thrives: the stadia, colourful flags, luxurious hotels, poverty shovelled out of sight, clean broad roads—a capital to be proud of. To deprive Delhi a little may not make it rain in Madras, calm Assam, quell Punjab, revive Calcutta, or humble Datta Samant; but a considered and humanitarian reallocation of resources would surely do more to establish peace than an untimely and vulgar display for our foreign guests.

New Delhi *Bharat Kapur*

RIVAL CLAIMS

"The Double Edged Sword" (March 15) was a very fair assessment of the situation in Jagannath Mishra's Bihar. The only reason the chief minister got rid of those ministers was because they were a threat to his position.

Patna *Vineet Kumar*

HOME TRUTHS

"Odd Man Out" (March 15) is hardly an objective assessment of politics of Karnataka. No mention has been made of the singular contribution of S. Bangarappa to the Janata-Ranga victory. The report is also silent about the Janata Party's subtle strategy to cut Bangarappa to size and eliminate the Kranti Ranga. How popular the Janata Party is without Bangarappa has been demonstrated at Tarikere.

Bombay *G.C. Pujari*

A BLOODY PRICE

"The Burning Of Assam" (February 28) told me more about the Assam situation than any other article. Surely the price of elections should not be the massacre of hundreds of innocent people.

Bombay *K.V. Krishnan*

■ No party, no matter how thumping its majority is, will be able to give a stable government in this situation. Every one recognises the futility of the elections except the Congress(I).

Sangli *Dr G.V. Tase*

■ We are horrified by the carnage in Assam but it is time to shake ourselves out of our stupor. We must take it upon ourselves to ensure that this is never repeated and make sure that the people responsible for the massacres are punished.

New Delhi *Ramit Budhraja*

■ The article erred in s minority voters will abstai from because of intimidation. In fact it would be the most willing to ex franchise as this was their chance their stay in Assam.

New Delhi

■ The communist parties got desserts! They obviously misj mood of the electorate and were th cash in on the absence of the ot sition parties.

Bangalore

■ What Mrs Gandhi has done i morally wrong and must be opp

Hamirpur

■ The reason for the Centre's ind to Assam's problem is that the Indian perceives that state to country. The violence there has impact as that in El Salvador, Kampuchea. If this was the situa other state, like Punjab or Gujara think the Government and the p have been so apathetic?

Delhi *Syed Ab*

■ The problem is that the Assam up so late. They should have sta ing for the expulsion of foreigners earlier.

Samastipur *Shyam N*

■ The Government's decision t elections in spite of not revising th rolls is a slap in the face of the a Government is now paying for th inducting and sponsoring a parti munity to the detriment of others

Darjeeling *Dev Ka*

■ The writer is very right in say "Bengalis are caught in a cruel Whether the issue is languag foreigners it is always the Bengal who are singled out for attack the present movement can be as one that is trying to an Bengalis.

Dibrugarh

■ The Assamese agitation sh shed for the sake of national in allow them leeway it will be th similar movements in the rest of

Kast

Kota

■ Considering the mass b other forms of resistance to th don't think the elected MLA's c people's representatives. Co they do not have the people's re must now reimpose President's rule.

Susant Das

Delhi

think it is about time the agitator's up their hard line attitude and started iating with the Centre seriously. The of lives is a result of their intransigence.

A.H. Subramaniam

abad

I can't understand the fuss about the e problem. The question of Muslim s was settled in 1947 when the s decided to create Islamic paradises. do they want to leave their country? And should we give them shelter?

V.V. Joshi

bi, Kenya

The article made it clear that the writer's ties lay with the agitators. But the f view of the Bengalis is not so hard to and. They came to the North-east the partition of Bengal to seek There is no question of "cultural sionism". No wonder the Centre has patience with their views.

Sadananda Biswas

rganas

It is a shame that the prime minister and chief election commissioner have not ed after the violence and killings.

P. Rama Raju

ore

After seeing the pictures and reading the e the Congress(I) hand seemed to be -spattered.

Sanjay Jain

It is all very well to blame the Assamese e killings but for them everything is at —their livelihoods, their homes and their y

Hemendra B. Vartak

How can you expect people who have d in the country for the last 20 years to ck up and leave for a country from they fled? The cover story focussed on on all aspects of the problem.

Jashobanta Choudhury

ta

The cover photograph is not of the State Electricity Board as is stated in tter From The Editor" (February of the Public Works Department.

Tapan Datta Chaudhuri

or in regretted.

—Editor

NSIVE LEISURE

ami Dhirendra Brahmachari's attempt to establish an amusement park i's Disneyland", Februay 28) is the of a foolish mind. The very idea that a where most people do not have enough to eat the Government should encourage an individual to build a place for relaxation is absurd. It would be better if his resources were diverted to the education of youngsters or the upkeep of the aged.

Burnpur *Mythily Raman*

■ What does Brahmachari mean when he says: "In India people will not allow any worthwhile project to be carried out"? Grabbing 5,000 acres of land is worthwhile for him—certainly not for the Indian public.

Sundargarh *Sajan Kumar Agarwal*

■ The Haryana state Government has not made any proposal to allot any land for setting up the reported Disneyland project. Nor is there any proposal under consideration of the Government at the moment and none of the landlords in Gurgaon district has been pressurised into donating land. The report is without any basis.

Chandigarh *M.L. Bhatia*

Jt. Director, Public Relations,
Government of Haryana

Nowhere does our report say that the Haryana Government has allotted any land to Dhirendra Brahmachari's project. What it does say is that the Brahmachari has asked for land and that the request was being processed. In fact, it was fowarded by the chief minister to the office of the deputy commissioner,. Gurgaon, with the chief minister's notation, 'for necessary action'.

The villagers in the area have told us that they do not want to part with the land but are under pressure to do so. They have held meetings to discuss this. In view of these facts the contention that our report is inaccurate cannot be accepted. It was only after the report was published that the Haryana government affirmed that it would not be allotting any land for the project.

—Editor

END OF A MYTH

With the article "End Of The Trail" (February 28) INDIA TODAY has destroyed the myths surrounding Phoolan Devi. It is an unfitting end to the years of media build-up.

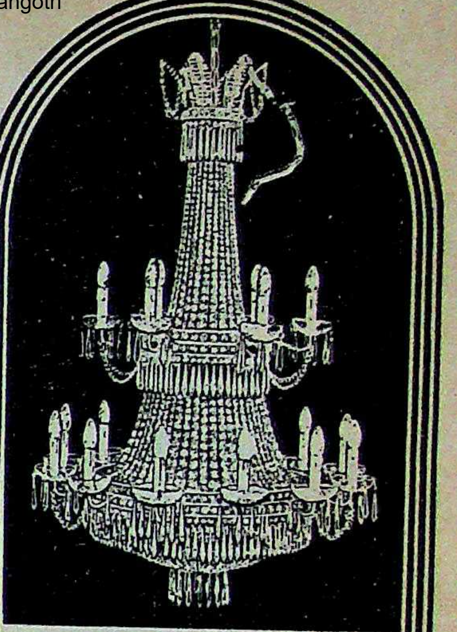
Vishakhapatnam *Raveendra Nath*

■ The Madhya Pradesh Government officials have exposed themselves as a publicity-hungry lot. By honouring surrendering dacoits we play into the hands of these immoral people

Secunderabad *Nazneen Eduljee*

■ By giving so many pages to Phoolan Devi's surrender you have proved that this magazine is no different from the others in sensationalising social menaces.

Calicut *Prem Bhanu*



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opinion about
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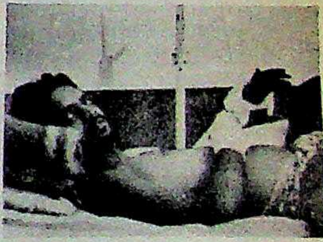
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

COVER STORY: It was the largest such gathering in history. Over 60 heads of state and governments representing half of the human race arrived in New Delhi last fortnight for the seventh Non-aligned Summit to try and chart a new direction for the movement. India, as chairman of the movement, can play a major role in that objective and by the way Mrs Gandhi took charge it appeared that her intention was just that. **Page: 8**

SPECIAL REPORT: After the most blood-stained election campaign in Indian history, the Congress(I) returned to power with an 'overwhelming' majority. With the people determined not to recognise the legitimacy of the Government, the task ahead of Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia is unenviable. Caught between a stubborn Centre and the intransigent agitationists, he has to restore peace and deal with the new power equation in the state. **Page: 24**

CURRENT EVENTS: For the Congress(I) the results of the latest crop of by-elections could not have been worse. The party lost six of the eight electoral contests in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. An analysis of what the victories and defeats spell for the ruling party. **Page: 42**

CRIME: When dacoit Ramesh Sikarwar stopped a bus in the Morena district of Madhya Pradesh last month, and kidnapped 15 passengers, he set off a relentless manhunt that has become the focus of the entire state's attention. With 1,000 policemen in hot pursuit, seven hostages have been rescued, one is dead and the drama is far from over. A on-the-spot report. **Page: 65**



SPECIAL FEATURE: Six years ago Jayanti Dharma Teja slipped out of the country in a cloud of controversy and with an alleged Rs 9 crore in unpaid taxes. Last fortnight the former chief executive of the Jayanti Shipping Corporation, who has served three years in prison resurfaced in Hyderabad. A report on the man, his dealings and his activities in the last few years with an in-depth interview. **Page: 80**

ECONOMY & INDUSTRY: Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee's budget has managed the difficult task of displeasing everybody. It is generally felt that this budget, like its predecessors, will have little effect on reversing the downward trend of the economy. A series of interviews with people from different spheres on what they make of the latest budget. **Page: 112**

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➤ Mrs Gandhi is God's gift to this country.

—*President Zail Singh at a function in New*

➤ One can only sympathise with his (Kamalapati Tripathi's) lot, for even ass that he is capable of reviving the dying party, he has not even been given the free c of medicines, and if the "child" (Rajiv Gandhi) were to die the blame would be al

—*Janardhan Thakur in* Onlo

➤ The argument that a radical change in tax laws will cause confusion in the department ... is pure eyewash .... Tax revenues will depend not only on the grow real output in industry but on the growth of real *declared* output.

—*Prem Shankar Jha in* The Times of I

➤ While the lionising of media-men in the media may gladden the hearts of rea it more often than not turns other participants a pale shade of green ...

—*Darryl D'Monte in* Su

➤ Mrs Gandhi is a born fighter. Therefore I admire her.

—*Dr Farooq Abdullah to pressmen in Bo*

➤ It is a scrap book. It is not a budget.

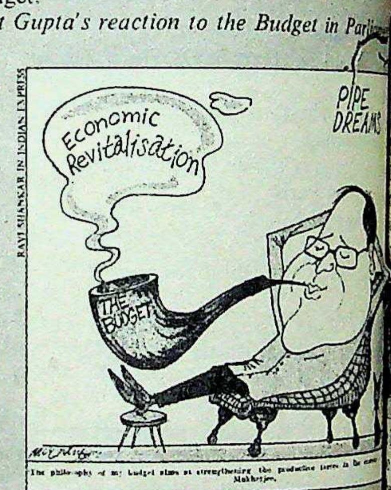
—*Inderjit Gupta's reaction to the Budget in Parli*

➤ Bihar is a state where all moral, social and political values have broken down. If any state is a microcosm of the rot eating into the body politic, it is the one Dr Mishra currently rules.

—*Editorial comment in* The Sunday Observer

➤ India might never have existed (for Americans), Gandhi is yet more alien than E.T.... there is nothing safe about Gandhi. His whole life brings into question every assumption that Americans make.

—*Linda Blandford quoted in* The Telegraph



The philosophy of my budget aims at strengthening the productive forces in the
Mukherjee.

➤ What Rajiv Gandhi could not do with all his computers and professionalis chief minister could with good old money-power.

—*An unnamed Congress(I) worker quoted in As*

➤ Where is the justification for India to include this (the question of bases) agreement between India and Pakistan?...it is an aspersion on our sincerity integrity....Pakistan will never give bases to anybody because we are holier th holy. we are the new entrants, the new convert.

—*Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq in* The Sunday Ob

➤ I ask counter-questions only when meaningless questions are put. I want t the questioner in place. Asking counter-questions is my idea of humour.

—*Morarji Desai in* The Illustrated Weekly o

➤ It is very true that I like to be well-dressed. I do use make-up and expensiv fumes like *Charlie*. I love everything I do.

—*Shalinitai Patil, wife of Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil in Bo*

➤ I could not resist making her (Phoolan Devi) into a romantic figure... No has put herself beyond human embrace. If found guilty, she should hang...

—*Khushwant Singh in* The Hindusta

➤ A person with reasonably photogenic looks and talent has no opportunit film world) unless he or she practises the politics of promiscuity.

—*Anita Reddy in G*

INDIA
TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

oice Of The Future

VEN its worst detractors will have to think twice before they deride the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) after its seventh in New Delhi last fortnight. Beyond the interminable shorn of the diplomatic verbiage, the movement which more than half of all humanity has sent forth a clear. message to the rest of the world: that there are differences the movement but its members are able to rise above issues de them and stand united for goals that mean much more: armament and economic justice.

fortuitous that the future of the movement will be in the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for the next three ovement has reaffirmed its priorities at a time of global recession, of turmoil in great power relations, and a cold war. The West, in particular, may therefore be tempted the clamour for change that emanates from the movement, will find it difficult to ignore India's leadership. Mrs s no-nonsense diplomacy and her self confident manner in national arena holds her in good stead, and as the voice of aligned she will have to be heard. And the better she succeeds beneficial for India will be the fall-out.

ONE change that may make the developed countries more responsive is that the leadership of the movement has passed out of the radical hands of Cuba into those of middle-of-the-road India, but they should be under no illusion that Mrs Gandhi will not push the fire close to their feet as she addresses hard questions national economic order. Mrs Gandhi, on her part, will make sure the movement remains even-handed in its dealings two power blocs; nothing would be more deleterious for the than to acquire the political hue of one or the other. movement cannot afford any more not to guard its dence with the utmost sincerity. It is a movement of the long struggles for justice and equality no less than the anti-battles of the past decades which gave it birth. The ound has shifted from the political to the economic arena. Delhi shows that 21 years after it was born, the movement of age and the world must take note.

nking Small

NCE ministers are not just bookkeepers, and budgets ot be reduced to year-end statistics. Large tasks face the but Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee's devotion is arithmetic. His bottom line is the budget deficit, and not performance. As India's youngest finance minister, he ave reflected the dynamism of youth rather than the rigidity on.

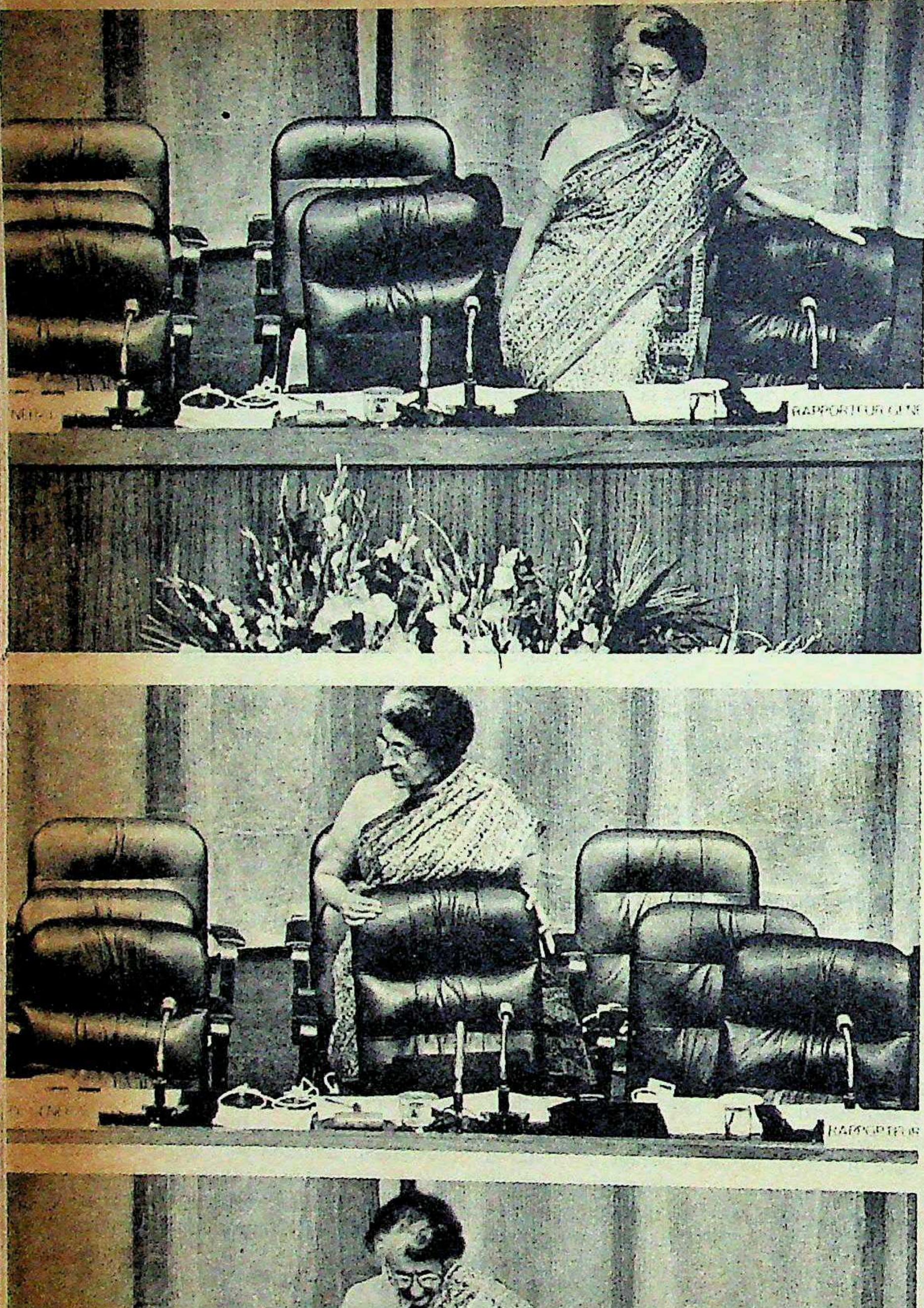
One budget cannot solve the country's problems. But it is possible to build into annual budgets to set the tone and thrust for long-term strategies. And Mr Mukherjee should at the least have addressed himself to immediate problems: slack industrial demand, the perilous trade gap, mounting unemployment, a wastage of installed production capacity, the pointless complexity of tax laws. These are not problems immune to solutions; more disturbing is that from Mr Mukherjee's feeble budget emanates the stench of defeatism: the lack of courage and political will to take bold measures. Before he stood up in the Lok Sabha on February 28 to make his budget speech, someone should have whispered in his ear: THINK BIG.

This is an economy of continental proportions, with more resources, enterprise and ballast than many. Its potential for growth is almost unmatched. But over the years it has slipped from the world's 10th industrial power to the 17th. Its share of world trade has halved, and it has missed every industrial boom of the last two decades, whether in shipbuilding or steel, textiles or electronics. At the cutting edge of industrial growth, what we present is a dull blade corroded by a rusty decision-making process.

THERE have been many such budgets before, and it should be instructive for the Finance Ministry's mandarins to see what some of the effects of their jugglery with tax rates has achieved: the number of doctors paying income tax has dropped in 20 years by more than half and that of tax paying lawyers by even more. This points not to the poverty of the sought-after professions but of the taxman's design. The problem with the tax net, after all, is not that it is too small but that its holes are too big. One-third of all spending in the country is now done by one government or another (at the Centre or in the states), but the need for more money only grows because there still isn't enough for the basics: power, transport, drinking water, basic sanitation, education. One cause of this is the coexistence of a shortage of capital and the affluent abandon with which it is used, yielding progressively less output per unit of capital invested. There is no deterrent—fiscal or physical—to wasting scarce funds on projects that give no economic return, or to converting viable schemes into bottomless pits of public malfeasance.

Efficiency is not achieved by pious instructions to government departments, but by institutionalising it through a system of accountability which is backed by a judicious use of the carrot and stick. In India, the failures get more attention and money than the successes. Elsewhere, production increases because industry's hounds are allowed to run. Here enterprise is on a leash, so ingenuity turns to beating the system or goes underground. The country should be lifting itself by its bootstraps, but contentment is ordained only for those who cease trying, or who rob the system to benefit themselves.

The best underwriting a budget can have is a sound economy. And the essence of a good budget lies in pulsing the right signals, setting goals and indicating priorities. Both the Government and the taxman need a simpler tax system; the economy needs more production, more exports, more jobs and less waste. It should have been possible for the budget to encourage these with a conceptual simplicity that rules out pettifogging confusion. That it hasn't is a pity.



The moment of truth; Mrs Gandhi pensively contemplates the chairman's seat on the deserted podium at Vigyan Bhavan during an unguarded moment after officially taking over (right).

NAM

India Takes Charg

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SECRETARY GENERA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHU RAI

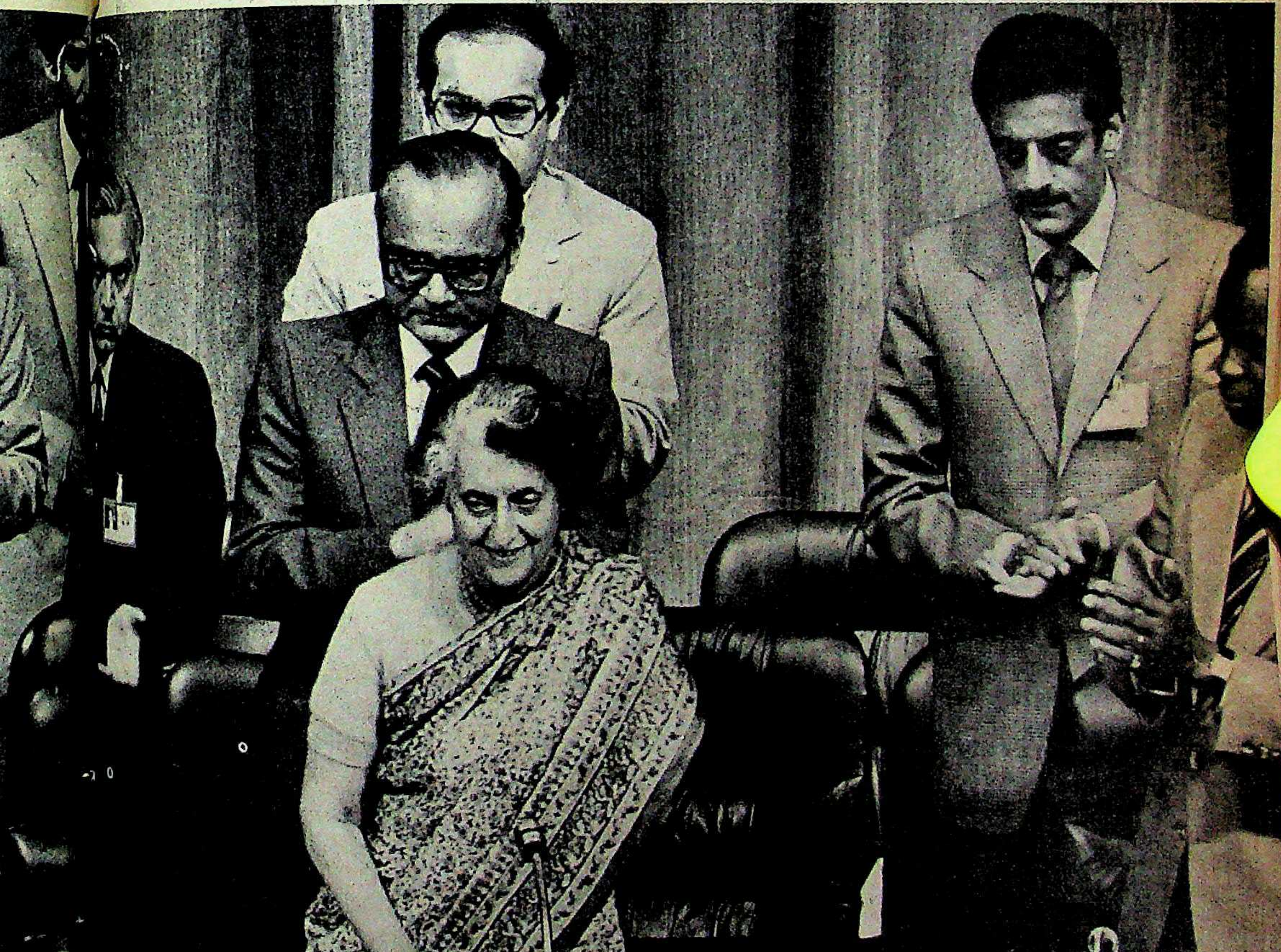
FROM the moment the opening chords of the Non-align- ed orchestra's seventh performance in New Delhi last fortnight drifted across Vigyan Bhavan, it was already that this was to be no ordinary sum- before the representatives of 101 including 60 heads of state and representing two-thirds of —the largest ever such gathering in -started deplaning at the spruced- area at Palam Airport the atmos- was charged with expectancy.

expectancy was undeniably fuelled air of relief that the reins of the Movement (NAM) had finally Cuba to India, thus ending a controversial and questionable 42- in the movement's history; a period that saw increasingly sharp divisions within the movement as well as a tragic loss of credibility. But more than the relief was the unquestionable realisation that India intended to take charge of the movement with uncustomary authority.

Decisive Air: Right from the moment that Mrs Gandhi, in her new role as chairman (or rather, chairperson as she herself directed she be termed) of the movement, ascended the rough-hewn speaker's podium and slipped on her elegant spectacles to deliver her keynote speech, there was evident a no-nonsense air and decisiveness in her movements which clearly spelt out the message that India had taken charge.

And finally, when she returned to her seat in the centre of the velvet-draped dais, there was far more than mere symbolism in what turned out to be the most-photographed event of the summit – the warm, affectionate embrace that outgoing chairman Fidel Castro gave her after pointedly ignoring her outstretched hand. In that highly-charged moment, with the tiny figure of Mrs Gandhi draped in green and gold enveloped in the olive green uniform of the bearded Cuban leader, lay the fragile future of the movement for the next few years; a future that would largely be governed, and guided, by Mrs Gandhi's moves and initiatives.

If Mrs Gandhi's initial actions are any indication, she is clearly determined to shake the movement out of its lethargy. NAM, described by the new chairperson as "history's biggest peace movement", has never been more in need of rejuvenation and recharging of its batteries. The Havana summit, in 1979, brought the movement to a lurching halt and the political and economic pressures of the



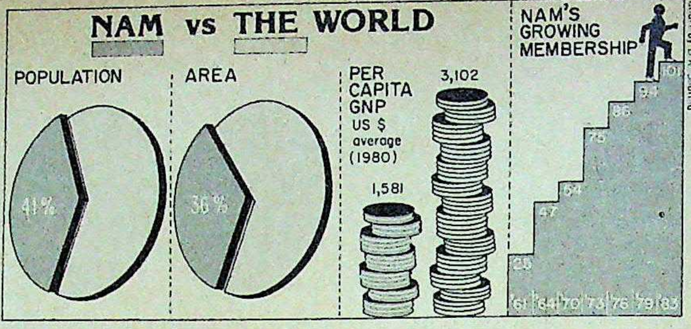
last 42 months proved too much, even for Castro's broad shoulders.

Now, with Mrs Gandhi at the helm, there is obviously a new awakening, a new optimism and a new sense of purpose. As Professor G.L. Bondarevsky, one of the three Soviet experts on non-alignment and international relations in New Delhi during the summit, predicted: "The seventh summit will be the most crucial in the history of the movement. You now have the right lady at the right place and the right time."

Appreciation: Bondarevsky's statement was echoed faithfully by every one of the 110 speakers who addressed the summit during the six-day deliberations, and a majority of them undoubtedly meant it. Singapore's crusty Deputy Prime Minister S. Rajaratnam, who created a storm when he roundly criticised the movement's "growing impotency", later told INDIA TODAY that New Delhi had injected a breath of fresh air into the movement. "We are now assured of strict impartiality," he remarked, "if anything objectionable happens, there will be no question of the chairman having fixed it," a snide reference to former chairman Castro's controversial decision to keep the Kampuchean seat vacant during the Havana summit.

But it was also an unspoken acknowledgement that the movement was now in capable hands and nobody could have demonstrated the truth of that more than Mrs Gandhi herself. If her stamina was characteristic before the summit, by the time it ended it was legendary. Except for the average of four hours' sleep she gave herself each day in the early morning hours, Mrs Gandhi was constantly on the move, maintaining the pressure and momentum that had started last November with what was India's most concerted diplomatic blitz ever. Midway through the summit, one Indonesian delegate was moved to marvel aloud: "It looks like Mrs Gandhi has a 36-hour day"; a tribute to her hectic, non-stop schedule which included meetings in her makeshift office at Vigyan Bhavan with a string of heads of state, chairing the conference and attending to her prime ministerial duties.

And yet, it will take more than mere stamina if India is to earn a permanent niche in the movement's history. As last fortnight's events revealed, each NAM summit also serves to reopen old wounds, bring divisions into sharper focus and unearth bones of contention that may have been long buried. Not unpredictably, the pre-summit deliberations by non-aligned foreign ministers chaired by Indian Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, was dominated by the contentious



> *"And this is the message I contribute upon ceasing in my capacity as the chairman of the movement of non-aligned countries: To struggle!"*
> —**FIDEL CASTRO RUZ** of Cuba—
>
> *"The New Delhi Non-Aligned Meeting acquired a character that is very desirable and it is now diverted to its original purposes."*
> —**GENERAL ZIA-UL-HAQ** of Pakistan—
>
> *"Our world around is burning. Let us, the poor nations of the world, unite; we have only our poverty to lose."*
> —**JUNIUS JAYEWARDENE** of Sri Lanka—
>
> *"Its (NAM's) past is one of which we can be justly proud, its present condition does it no credit and finally, if it persists in its present course, its failure will be one of shameful oblivion."*
> —**S. RAJARATNAM**, of Singapore—
>
> *"If we are honest, we must say that the Non-Aligned Movement is not monolithic. There are different persuasions and beliefs and tendencies within the movement."*
> —**MAURICE BISHOP** of Grenada—
>
> *"It is this still disturbing tendency of the strong to dominate the weak, of the powerful to subjugate the meek that makes us strive for a new world order based on freedom, justice and peace."*
> —**KING BIRENDRA** of Nepal—
>
> *"The essentially evolutive nature of international relations demands from non-aligned countries the adoption of a positive and dynamic approach in the search for solutions."*
> —**REYNALDO BIGNONE** of Argentina—
>
> *"Our movement must continue to be the engine that drives the world towards peace and not war, towards order and not anarchy. It must be the fountain of peace and security."*
> —**KENNETH KAUNDA** of Zambia—

Kampuchean issue ched into a marath lasting almost the days.

Contentious Issu tely, the issue proved knot that even India's tic offensive and fran stage lobbying failed While a total of 36 spearheaded by the As of South-east Asian (ASEAN) forcibly mov the vacant seat to the Sihanouk-led government, 31 countries strongly the move in support of the Heng Sa me. In that situation, the only cho Rao was to pass the buck on by stic the Havana decision and leaving open. Rao's task was made more di the fact that India supports the Hen regime and any effort to sway the tions would have cast immediate India's credibility.

In return for leaving the issue the Kampuchean seat vacant, the group demanded, and received, ment that clear-cut criteria would blished by NAM for the future ex suspension of a member state. In original 23-page Indian draft de circulated to all members of th ment at the beginning of Febru called for a "comprehensive po lution which would provide for drawal of all foreign forces" in Ka It also urged all states in the "undertake a dialogue which wo the resolution of differences am selves and the establishment of peace and stability in the area".

The Kampuchean crisis offe ever, the classic non-aligned contra one of their member states becom leground of superpower rivalry and and pressures that result. The AS tries like Singapore were obvious to the Sino-American tune of deni Soviet-backed Heng Samrin regim ped up by the Vietnamese army tioning its legitimacy. The Sovie Vietnam and Laos, sought to claims of the Sihanouk regim grounds that they had no physical the country and they were guilty tion of the brutal crimes of the regime and the Khmer Rouge wh of the Sihanouk coalition.

Consensus Decision: But by th the summit, a major breakthrough made with three ASEAN members nam and Laos finally agreeing to lement through negotiations amo selves without intervention by an power, including China. Rajara

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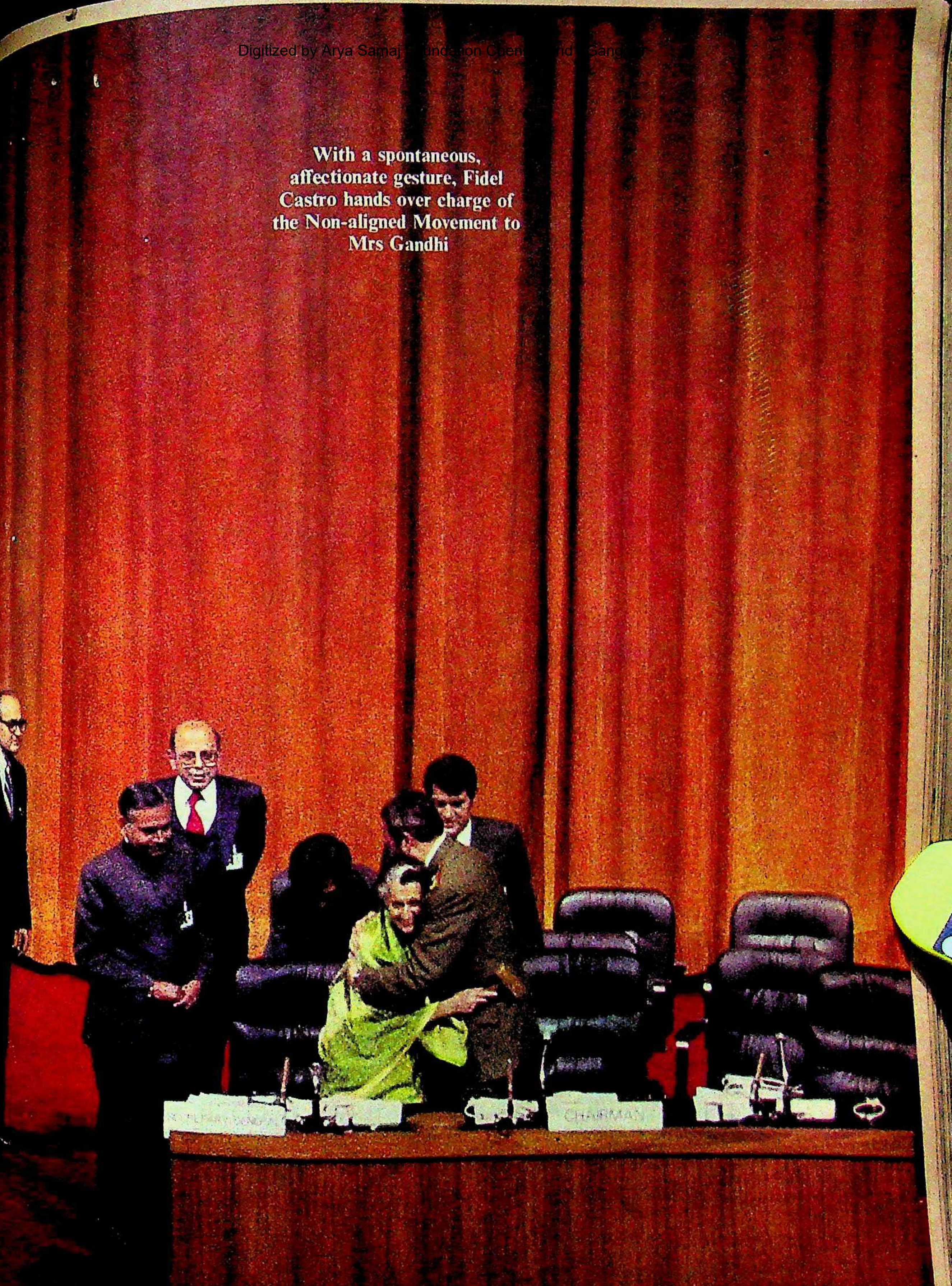

With a spontaneous, affectionate gesture, Fidel Castro hands over charge of the Non-aligned Movement to Mrs Gandhi self confirmed that the idea of a "collective dialogue" had taken shape in the corridors of Vigyan Bhavan thanks to two major Vietnamese concessions the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea need not be present and that the dialogue be held without preconditions.

But if New Delhi failed to finally resolve the Kampuchean question, the Indian side at least succeeded in ensuring that the issue did not serve to stall proceedings during the actual summit. Many heads of state were politely pressured to play down the Kampuchean issue during their speeches or at least avoid outright support to one side or the other. One leader who complied was Pakistan's President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. In his speech, circulated in a glossy green folder, one paragraph on Kampuchea has been carefully whitened out in what was obviously a last-minute concession.

Diplomatic Feat: The deleted portion reads: "The United Nations has duly recognised the coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea as the legal representative of the people of Kampuchea. The Non-aligned Movement would be wanting in the fulfilment of its fundamental obligation if it were to adopt a position at variance with that of the international community by not permitting the legitimate Government of Democratic Kampuchea to assume its rightful seat in the movement." Pakistan's support for the Sihanouk faction is well known and it must have taken considerable persuasion to make Zia leave out the portion he did.

But India's moderating influence failed to stop the Kampuchean issue from degenerating into a propaganda ba side the summit confines. The Si delegation, still smarting at Castro's ling of the Kampuchean issue in Ha circulated a hard-hitting indictm Cuba's chairmanship entitled "Hav New Delhi: What has it achieved?" spoke in combatitive terms o "swamp" and "brothel area" tha had led the movement into.

Cuba lost no time in circula equally-acid reply titled "From Singa Singapore" claiming that the US Stat partment had sent detailed instructi number of non-aligned states on the i stand they should adopt in New "Singapore," said the document, "as be the Troy Horse (*sic*) of imperialism the movement and the broadcast o Voice of America with a Chinese accent.

SEVENTH NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT
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New Delhi 1983
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rbal Battleground: Cuba and Singa-
ere not the only culprits. Half-way
h the summit, the crowded media
in Vigyan Bhavan became a verbal
round with propaganda pamphlets
g the shelves like confetti. But event-
hey also served to indicate in advance
es that would prove the most intrac-
of which the Iran-Iraq war and the

Gandhi, Castro and Natwar Singh
with the assembled leaders in the
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President Zail Singh with: the
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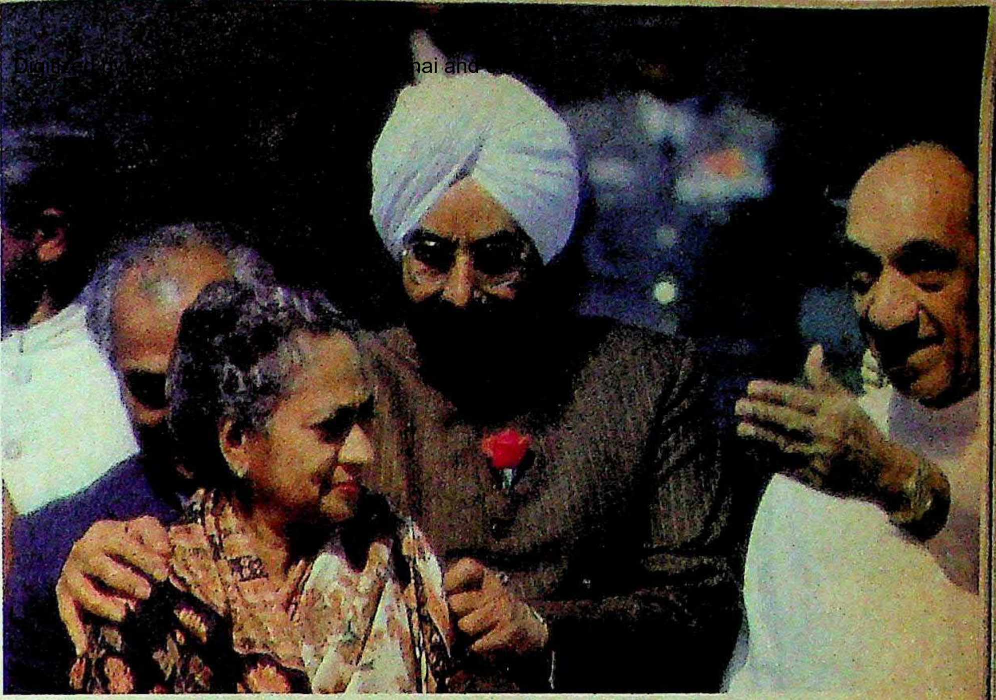
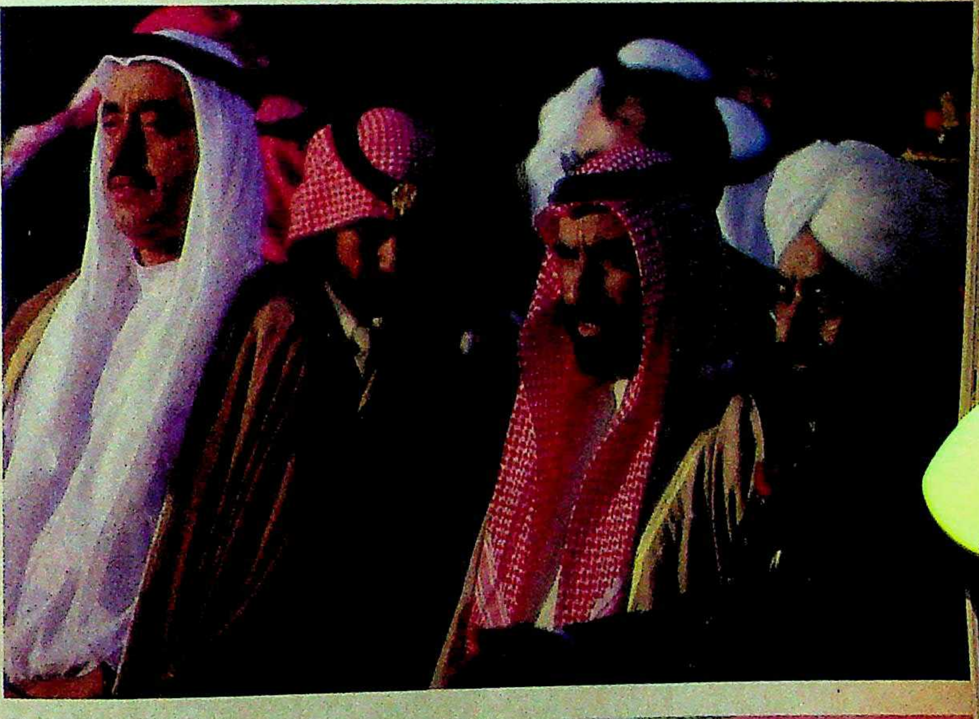
Egypt's Mubarak





RAGHU RAI

WELCOME
SEVENTH NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT

RAGHU RAI

DELHI

A Capital Show

IT WAS quite an order: to beautify and to maintain Delhi would play host to a glittering ing of heads of states. Yet in less weeks, a high-powered team headed Governor Jagmohan converted Delhi into a show-piece conference for the developing world. Delhi Ad tration and New Delhi Municipal mittee (NMDC) worker teams transfo eye-sores into beauty spots, remo roads for smooth driving, improved lighting and redeveloped all ga around the hotels which were ho heads of states for one week. As a rian delegate put it: "I never ex

related decision of where to hold the NAM summit predictably raised the dust. These also succeeded in extend summit well beyond its appointed de

India had made a Herculean ef hammer out some kind of a peace settl between Iran and Iraq which, if it wo would have been the biggest breakthro the movement's 21-year-old history. the Indian ambassadors in Baghd Teheran had been summoned back f meeting to aid in the closed door co tions with the two warring countries a Gandhi had made an emotional app the subject during her keynote addres inaugural session. But clearly the attitude during the summit and in the briefings displayed that they were mood for compromise. Both sid kicked up a controversy even bef summit started, by flying in heavily commandos without informing th country about their intentions. Iraq dent Saddam Hussein kept the su suspense till the last minute befor deciding not to attend.

EVEN without his presence, trast in the attitudes of both sides an overt indication of their re positions. The Iraqis, clad in sober s ties, maintained a low profile thro which was in keeping with their avo sion to put an end to the fratricidal w were clearly prepared to bend ov

Delhi decked up for NAM: posters, and flags on the roads; a riot of and armed guards welcome delegates to Vigyan Bhavan

New Delhi would be so beautiful.” Jagmohan and his team, had earlier ...fully done much the same thing Asiad '82. The Lt-Governor, along P.S. Bhatnagar, administrator, ...toured the New Delhi area and ...ed 21 roads, over a ...parks, half a dozen ...ercial centres—in- ...ing Connaught Place— ...other public places ...the delegates would ... The Asiad stalwarts ...in the limelight again. ...instance, NMDC Chief ...eer V.P. Chetal, who ...chief project engineer of ...Indoor Stadium, was ...sible for road main-...ance.

Unstinted Effort: Over ...engineers and other offi-...kept a 24-hour vigil around Ashok Hotel, Taj Mahal Hotel, Vigyan Bhavan and Hotel Oberoi Intercontinental. Keeping in view the large number of Muslim delegates—over 30 per cent—the Jama Masjids of both New Delhi and Old Delhi received special attention. In fact, the NMDC also provided specially designed floral arches, buntings and over 300 poles for the national flags of the countries at strategic points. In addition, the New Delhi Traders' Association was persuaded to illuminate the Janpath and Connaught Place shopping complexes in the evening.

Jagmohan: meeting the challenge

Delhi Administration officials are unable to give details of total expenditure but according to an unofficial estimate over Rs 1 crore was spent on improving 21 roads, providing sodium road-lights and raising welcome arches. Jagmohan would not have succeeded without the unstinted support of the Centre which authorised him to clear any financial commitment without delay.

The enterprising Lt-Governor authorised the hiring of over 3,000 temporary hands—mostly beggars—who were assigned specific areas. A monitoring cell at his house monitored progress on the projects twice a week. Says Jagmohan: “We took NAM as a challenge. And I am proud of the officials who have succeeded in giving us the best in minimum time. Moreover, keeping the city clean and beautiful should not be linked with special functions. I am sure the Delhi Administration, the Corporation and the NDMC are capable of maintaining the same standards after the summit.”

—PRABHU CHAWLA

...their efforts to bring peace and ...lance of economic stability to the ... The Iranians, sporting the scraggy ...that have become a badge of their ..., displayed the kind of arrogance ...only come with fanatical faith in a ...use.

...must, however, be said to the credit of ...negotiators that they succeeded in ...the Iranians to climb down from their ...that the removal of Saddam Hussein ...a prerequisite for ending the war. But ...Prime Minister Hussein Moussani...made it appallingly clear that the ...ditions; withdrawal of Iraqi forces ...ian territory; payment of reparations ...ounting to $50 billion; the naming ...as the aggressor; and the return of ...es in Iran would remain. Even ...President Hosni Mubarak's major ...ic initiative during the summit to ...between the two warring camps ...mellow the Iranian stand.

...endable Effort: Inevitably, the ...issue and the related question of ...of the next summit, which was ...ingly in favour of Baghdad, stret...proceedings beyond the scheduled ... In a final and Herculean effort to ...deadlock, Mrs Gandhi called in the ...both delegations shortly after mid-...the last day to try and hammer out ...ptable compromise. PLO leader ...was also requisitioned to use his not ...erable influence on the two sides. ...1.15 a.m. a beaming Mrs Gandhi ...to the main hall to announce that ...promise had been reached on the ...declaration which, with relatively ...changes and the deletion of one para-...at the insistence of Iran) was more or less the same as the original draft submitted by India. But even the brief two paragraphs on the two issues that held the key to the success and failure of the summit represented a major triumph not just for Mrs Gandhi but for the movement.

And, even though the summit failed to bring a guarantee of peace between Iran and Iraq, its achievements in regard to the general crisis in the Middle East were not entirely insignificant. As Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud-al Faisal sagely observed: “For the first time in several years, the Arab countries have put up a solid front.”

Interim Understanding: An imprecise measure of understanding was reached between PLO leader Yasser Arafat, the most ebullient presence at the summit, and King Hussein of Jordan, as well as between Arafat and President Gemayel of Lebanon on the complex Palestinian issue. The fact that the original Indian political draft had finally been expanded from 23 pages to its final 92-page format was largely because of the extra paragraphs that Arafat insisted on inserting. The original draft on Palestine contained five paragraphs, the final draft contained 17.

Further, the Fez Peace Plan was approved by all the Arab leaders present, including Arafat, while the Reagan Peace Plan was rudely sidelined for the absurdly simple reason that nobody was really convinced that Reagan could force Israel to allow a Palestinian homeland to flower on the West Bank and Gaza, even if it was not officially declared as a sovereign state.

But by far the biggest triumph of India's shuttle diplomacy during the run-up to the summit was over the prickly Afghanistan issue. As in the case of Iran and Iraq, the Indian Ambassador in Kabul, Mani Dixit, was flown back to New Delhi for the summit. Clearly, the pre-summit negotiations had succeeded in ensuring that the issue was kept as muted as possible, particularly in the case of Pakistan. Zia has already established a hot line to Moscow over the Afghanistan question and as he himself remarked: “The key to open the door to the Afghanistan issue lies in Moscow and we must realise that.”

Afghanistan Prime Minister Sultan Ali Keshtmand, widely tipped to take over from Babrak Karmal shortly, took a predictable line in his speech praising the Soviets for their help and support of the Non-aligned Movement. But both Pakistan and Afghanistan stand to gain considerably from the constructive turn the Afghan crisis took during the summit. The ongoing negotiations have led to a situation where Pakistan, and consequently the rest of the world, will recognise the Karmal regime. In return, Pakistan will agree to the Durand Line being recognised as the international frontier.

IN FACT, one major success of the deliberations over the Afghanistan issue was almost immediately apparent. On his return to Dhaka after the summit, Bangladesh Chief Martial Law Administrator H.M. Ershad announced that his country had decided to normalise relations with Kabul. Ershad stated that his talks in New Delhi during the summit with Keshtmand had been a success and had brought about a measure of understanding between the two countries.

But throughout the hectic lobbying activity in the corridors and private rooms, and the intense football huddles in the main hall, it was clear that what the entire exercise boiled down to in the final draft was a tricky tightrope walk between the two countries that were conspicuously absent—the superpowers. Nothing perhaps demonstrated this as much as the manoeuvring over the final declaration on the Indian Ocean. The original draft covered five paragraphs which contained a pointed reference to the American base on Diego Garcia, now in the process of undergoing major expansion. However, Sri Lanka, which hosts a conference on the Indian Ocean next year in Colombo, was eager that the US be represented at the conference. Accordingly, Sri Lanka, which had done its homework well, moved an amendment in the early stages of the summit to de Diego Garcia issue from the declara the Indian Ocean.

The strategy was clearly to avo ting the US which could have led refusal to attend the Sri Lanka co Despite efforts by India and front can states to stick to the original f

INDO-PAKISTAN

Giving Peace A Chance

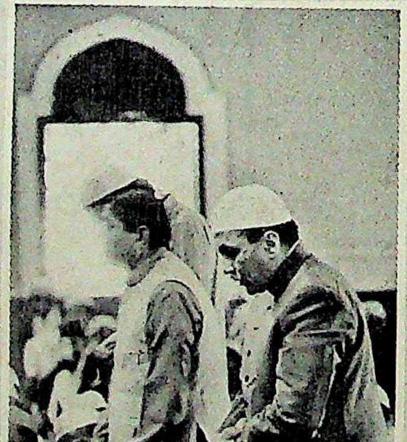
THE ZIA-UL-HAQ who came to the Non-aligned Summit was not the Zia-ul-Haq of 1980 and 1981. The anti-Soviet fire, ignited by the Afghanistan invasion, had cooled. In his plenary speech, he declined to mention the Soviet Union even once and raised eyebrows with his moderation in discussions on Afghanistan with other heads of state. His reference to Kashmir, so visibly played up by the media, was trite. And, the overall impression was that of a leader out to make friends.

Heads of state apart, Zia hosted a dinner for 60 Indians, mostly non-officials, and met with the editors in the capital. Dressed as simply as other Pakistanis, in the regulation black achkan and white salwar, Zia spoke to each, clasping the hand of the guest in his own. Officials in his entourage, including Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan and presidential adviser Lt-General K.M. Arif, talked and behaved as if they were in a friendly country, meeting old *yaars*. At St Stephen's College, his Alma Mater, Zia was the enthusiastic old student revisiting the haunts of youth. Whatever the acerbic *Pakistan Times* had to say, it was full of praise for the Indian management of the summit and openly pleased that Premier Indira Gandhi would chair the movement for the next three years.

Mrs Gandhi's overcrowded schedule did not permit her and General Zia to have comprehensive talks on India-Pakistan relations. But they met thrice, at state banquets on two occasions, and once formally, though for a short while. The 16 month-old dialogue produced its first bonny baby on March 10 when the foreign ministers initialled an agreement setting up a joint India-Pakistan Commission to promote trade, economic, technological, cultural and humanitarian relations. Thus, for the first time since Partition, an institutional framework was given to cooperative relations between Pakistan and India. The commission, which will have sectoral subcommissions, would meet at least once a year alternately under the chairmanship of the two foreign ministers. Pakistan recently set up a similar joint commission with China; India and China are still to establish one.

Sensitive Endeavour: Mrs Gandhi and General Zia did briefly talk about a treaty, but apparently did not proceed beyond their joint decision of November 1, 1982, that the Pakistani draft of a no-war pact and the Indian draft of a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation be taken up together. The effort to blend the two into a single draft acceptable to both countries evidently remains stalled.

President Zia told INDIA TODAY that for political reasons he was unable to accept a "friendship" treaty with India. "Call it anything else, and I shall accept it," he remarked. He also said that he would welcome efforts by academics and other intellectuals in the two countr "marry" the two drafts if they coul have told Madam that as a new conv non-alignment, Pakistan will zeal guard its sovereignty and independ and do nothing that could compro either."



Zia at Friday prayers in Delhi

The drafting skill of Indian an Pakistani diplomats has yet been una to compose a treaty that satisfies the sensibilities of both nations. There only two points on which signific differences persist: bilateralism and b ses. On bilateralism, the best course India and Pakistan would be to inc porate the core of the Simla Agreement 1972 in a new treaty. The language of Simla Agreement was crafted with co siderable finesse. It met the Indian po that outstanding issues between the t countries should be resolved bilateral and by peaceful means, but it did n formally deprive Pakistan of its right raise any issue at international forums both countries could live for 11 years w the Simla formulation, there's no reas why they cannot live with it for anoth 10 or 20 years.

On the question of bases, Gene Zia is on record that Pakistan will lend bases or facilities to a foreign po in the context of great po confrontation—which is what memb ship of the Non-aligned Movement quires. That should satisfy India. W India does not want is that Pakis place base facilities to the United St in the context of a US-Soviet confr tation in West Asia or over Afghanis Several countries who have given facilities to one or the other superpo are members of NAM. And it would very good first step for India to get Pakistan a commitment that it would lend bases to a superpower in the con of cold war or confrontation. That makes Pakistan's non-alignment stro than it is now. It could be made stro still once India-Pakistan relations come solidly friendly. If General cannot accept the term "friendship" domestic reasons, is there any reas should not be a Treaty of A Cooperation and Non-aggression?

—BHABANI SEN GU

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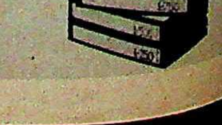

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Sri Lankan diplomacy triumphed. The final draft contains no mention of Diego Garcia in the ... on the Indian Ocean but ... to it as "foreign bases", while ... separate section titled 'Mauritian sovereignty over Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia' has been added on to the final declaration.

Soviet Discomfiture: But if the Indian Ocean declaration represented a minor victory for the US it was clearly a defeat for the Soviets. ... Moscow's discomfiture, the ... resolution on the Indian Ocean ... the USSR with the US in ... of military presence in the ... But the Soviets could have ... scant consolation from the ... that overall the final draft ... gained more of an anti-US edge ... an anti-Soviet one—the US ... criticised by name 15 times ... it was obvious that the ... was in no mood to con... either head-on.

No socialist member of NAM raised the "natural ally" theory which proved so divisive at Havana. Compared to 15 speakers who praised the USSR for its efforts to arrest the nuclear drift and its support for liberation movements, even the staunchest pro-US members were unable to sing the praises of US foreign policy, including Singapore and Saudi Arabia. Among the middle powers, Britain came in for criticism while France received praise for its contribution towards resolving issues in the developing world.

Taking the political and economic resolutions together, the world outlook of NAM continues to remain pointedly anti-American—particularly among the Latin American countries—on nuclear weapons, militarisation, its backing of Israel and South Africa, disarmament and practically all economic issues involving the North and South. China, with its low-key diplomacy and low profile presence outside the summit hall,

Arafat, with Castro, flashes the 'V' sign: anti-American edge

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MEDIA

Elaborate Extravaganza

THE NON-ALIGNED summit was a media event like very few happenings on the Indian soil had ever been. For seven days, the confabulations behind the arched door of New Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan blitzed the international news-columns and air-time, with miles of teleprinter tapes spewing forth ... million words for their takers abroad.

As the summit began last fortnight, ... correspondents from 90 different countries had descended on the capital. They represented a wide gamut of linguistic and ethnic groups. The foreign press corps outnumbered their Indian peers by ...

Brisk Business: For the entire week of NAM, the 'media centre' at the Vigyan Bhavan, done up in 12 weeks by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) at a cost of Rs 40 lakh was chock-a-block with newsmen. The 10,000 sq ft hall, fitted out with 400 telephone lines (all of which, mercifully, worked), 30 international trunk lines and 100 teleprinter terminals, left enough room for mixing business with pleasure.

The bar attached to the centre, run by the public sector India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) sold in a week 11,000 bottles of beer and 250 bottles of liquor to guzzlers of the fourth estate. Said Selamat Raidey, 36, reporter from *Waspada* newspaper in Indonesia: "With so much comfort, every journalist out here feels grateful to the organisers."

The officials of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) will get full marks for their efficient effort. They dished out copies of speeches, summaries, backgrounders, maps, and charts in reams of paper which weighed 10 tonnes. The PIB had also arranged for 200 typewriters, and provided computer aid for fixing news appointments with the visiting potentates. Said U.C. Tiwari, the principal information officer of the Union Government: "The visiting newsmen were not spoon-fed; they were treated to a banquet of information."

Colossal Effort: Delhi Telephones burnt midnight oil and fielded 150 personnel to accomplish the Herculean task of providing communication back-up to the visiting journalists. Altogether 1,900 international calls were made from the centre, lasting 22 hours and connecting 65 countries.

Revenue earned: Rs 2 lakh. The telex machines clattered for 800 hours, with a billing of over Rs 10 lakh. Foreign newspapers and agencies were connected to Vigyan Bhavan by 30 point-to-point international hotlines. "I never felt that I had stirred out of my office desk," said Sofia Montenegroa, the Spanish-speaking correspondent of *Barricada*, a Nicaraguan paper.

The size of the contingent from each country often bore no relation with its area or population. Nepal, for instance, sent 37 newsmen, and Pakistan sent 46, while only three journalists came from Nigeria and seven from Tanzania.

From Vietnam, the focus of the hottest controversy in the Non-aligned world, the lone newsman who covered the NAM was Lam Nguyen Xuan of the Vietnam News Agency. Little Cuba, on the other hand, sent 56 newsmen, while Egypt, one of the founders of the Non-aligned Movement, celebrated the traditional link by sending the largest contingent of 73.

The valedictory act to the seven-day-long media extravaganza was, of course, the press conference of Mrs Gandhi as NAM's chairperson. It was attended by 600 journalists, with 900 officials and security men in tow. The next day, as the media centre was locked—at least until the meet of the heads of Commonwealth states slated for September this year—many newsmen cast a last, longing look at it. For them, it was an occasion to see, and be seen.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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escaped virtually unscatched. In the African context as well, the summit rejected the US Government's view that Namibia's independence was linked to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

While NAM's political discussions raised the most dust—and grabbed the largest headlines—there was much less rancour and more serious work under way in the economic committees. The seventh summit, for a change, decided to tackle issues head on instead of leaving them simply at the declaration level. Calling for global negotiations at the earliest —the first conference as early as next year—the summit threw up two options, leaving it to Mrs Gandhi in her capacity as chairperson of the movement to choose one or the other. Sri Lanka's President Junius Jayawardene said that India should call a meeting of selected heads of state, a sort of Third World Cancun-type initiative, to talk to the leaders of major developing countries to tackle the worsening global economy "by adopting a programme of immediate measures in areas of critical importance to developing countries". The Algerian delegation put forward a separate idea that the non-aligned should assemble a committee of foreign ministers from amongst themselves to travel to the industrial nations and explain what the developing world is asking for.

Sidelights

- *The longest speech was by Fidel Castro who spoke for 110 minutes. Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho, President Didier Ratsiraka of Madagascar and President Machel of Mozambique tied for second place with 75 minutes each. An impressive 54 hours was logged by the 90 leaders who addressed the meet.*
- *Leading the group of 10 who did not speak was Tanzanian President Julius Nyrere who said he wished to set an example by remaining silent.*
- *Mrs Gandhi probably set a record by seeing 81 national leaders in three days. A typical end of day routine was when she met Iraq's Tariq Aziz at 1.30 a.m., Yasser Arafat at 2 a.m. and Mali's foreign minister at 3 a.m.; Arafat met her with an affectionate: "Good morning, my beloved sister."*
- *The Kampuchean issue was eventually called* **Kissa Kursi Ka**

The Algerians were being realistic in calling for an immediate dialogue with the rich nations. With rising unemployment, slower economic growth, higher inflation rates and generally sluggish trade, the world economy is currently in a tighter spot than at any time since the end of the Second World

HOTELS

Hospitality Unbounded

AT THE end of the week-long Non-aligned Summit in New Delhi one thing was clear: never before had such a high-level meeting of international heads of state been so elaborately planned in the Indian capital, and nor had it gone off as smoothly. In its organisation, management and presentation, the summit drew upon the widest range of Indian skills and services, and applied them so effectively that even last year's Asiad '82 somehow seemed a lesser event. New Delhi itself looked transformed: in the last flush of spring, its broad avenues and roundabouts, seemed to burst with flowers at every corner while from every lamp post hung colourful banners and flags. With major public buildings like Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House and Connaught Place spectacularly illuminated each evening, bands and fountains playing in parks, old monuments spotlit for special effect and traffic rerouted to cause the minimum of inconvenience, the city seemed to resemble some grand illusion.

The hospitality matched the picture of beauty and serene elegance. Entering New Delhi through the portals of the special VIP building at Palam Airport, artistically decorated by designer Rajeev Sethi with traditional doors and windows brought in from all parts of the country, heads of state and delegates were whizzed off into the tightly-guarded pleasure domes of five-star hotels. Each of the four hotels housing the heads of state—the Ashok, Taj Mahal, Maurya Sheraton and Oberoi Intercontinental—had undertaken refurbishing and hospitality plans on a scale unheard of before.

Sealed off completely from the public, the hotels seemed to be vying with each other to provide comfort and service. The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)-owned Ashok which housed the maximum number of heads of state, 41, completed its Rs 2.2 crore worth first phase of refurbishing plans. Using Hong Kong-based designer Dale Keller's services, it added 28 new luxury suites to its existing 13, while refurnishing all public areas of the mammoth hotel. Adding new carpets, revamping the lighting system and setting up special kitchens, it took special care of the 41 suites: each equipped with colour television, special hotlines, crockery, cutlery, glassware, linen and special uniforms for waiters in special attendance.

Princely Fantasy: Arrangemen private sector hotels like the Taj M and the Oberoi Intercontinental were thing short of princely fantasy. Four d before the summit's start, the 13 pr dential suites at the Oberoi looked dream palaces. Designers Rina Singh a Sunita Kohli in a matter of 10 weeks h produced the kind of luxury last s during the heyday of the Maharaj massive Art Deco bathrooms of polis granite—each fitted with a bathtub w built-in jacuzzi imported at a cost of R 80,000—furniture and furnishings opulent they had to be matched with gold-and-white plasterwork ceilings, a individually handpicked antiques fr far corners of the country casually d played.

At the Oberoi there were some he of state, however, who were bringin things. Four days before he moved in advance party of aides and officials fr Qatar were making sure things w going to be comfortable for their Em His special bed-linen had been flown Cases of mineral water were being s ked in the rooms. And the hotel w making special arrangements to ens that the Emir's special cooks who tr with him were checked in next to his s temporarily converted into pantr "The Egyptian President has asked f two telex machines to be installed in suite," muttered Pavan Verma, hotel's executive assistant manager, raced through the list of special arrang ments. Fresh orchids flown in fr Singapore, Badedas from Austria, Egyptian cooks from the Oberoi M House in Cairo, 600 jars of Russian ca re (at Rs 480 a jar), lamb chops from Au tralia, five varieties of champagne from Dom Perignon, 38 varieties of w the best rum from Jamaica, vodka fr Russia, beer from Denmark and finest brand of French cognacs and queurs. The Oberoi reckons their l bill alone would be about Rs 5 lakh.

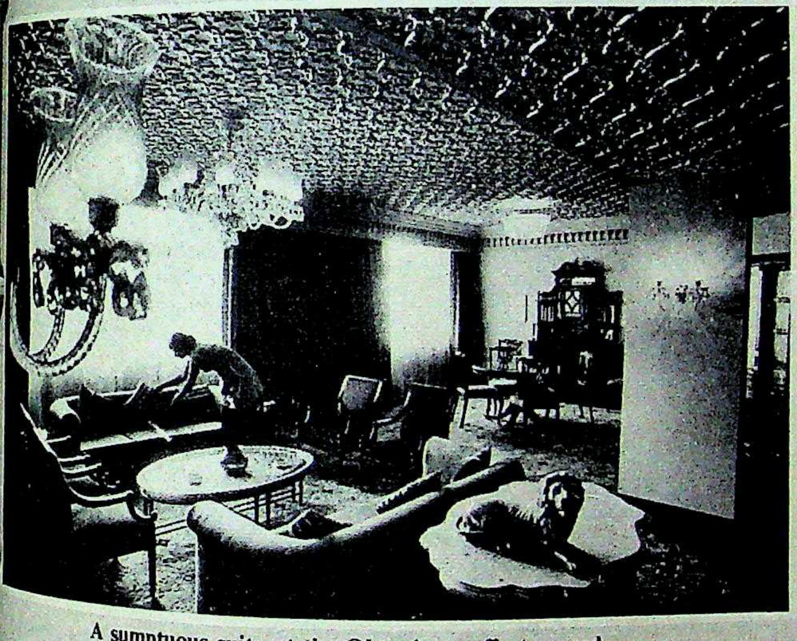
Elaborate Menus: Special menus ganised by the Taj and the Oberoi in ded elaborate Middle Eastern spr as well as extended French selections tached to normal room service fare. T Taj offered delicacies like "Poulet P Argenteuil" (chicken poached in w wine and garnished with asparagus and "Poulet Cyrano" (legs of chi stuffed with mushroom and minced ken braised in wine) whereas the O ad an extravagant Egyptian choice, the n course of which takes four hours to k. With both beef and pork wiped out f all hotel kitchens—to protect the reli-ous sensibility of delegates—lamb and icken naturally formed the staple diet.

Occasionally, of course, the heads of ate brought their own cooks or cooking ediums. The Marxist President of Zim-bwe, Dr Robert Mugabe brought ong two female chefs—"cute young ings", said a spokesman of the Taj sel—who prepared dishes for their ster in the hotel's main kitchen.

Other heads of state were enamou-ed of Indian cooking—Prince Saud-al-aisal of Saudi Arabia, who is also fo-eign minister of his country, was so ken up by the quality of Indian rice that immediately ordered 3,000 kg of the est Basmati to take home; while royalty om another West Asian kingdom vir-ally bought out the carpet shop at his otel. The Sierra Leone head of state ought two three-wheeler auto-rick-aws, and a silver 'throne'. Other delega-es from the Arab world chose to pick up ecimens of Indian fauna: over 50 Arab mbers of media teams were seen car-ing caged parrots, mynahs and other irds into their hotel rooms.

Incredible Efforts: Much the biggest fort in providing accommodation, tran-port and catering facilities was underta-en by the ITDC which also ran duty free hops in five hotels. Two thousand of its 2,800 rooms available in nine hotels in Delhi were made over to NAM to accom-odate heads of state, delegates, obser-er and guest missions as well as all the media. The catering task the ITDC undertook was stupendous: it brought together 165 of its best chefs from all over India, 40 food and beverage managers and 500 students from catering colleges countrywide to provide service for everything from the Indian prime minister's inaugural banquet at the Ashok's Convention Hall to her daily lunches for 20 heads of state each at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The ITDC also ran the massive catering facilities at Vigyan Bhavan, which included a daily sit-down meal service and bar for heads of state, a separate café and bar for delegates to serve 2,000 and a newly-built cafeteria for the media which fed upto 4,000 people a day. Sales from the last—which also provided the cheapest bottle of beer in town—crossed Rs 45,000 a day.

The ITDC also made available a total of 1,400 cars and coaches to NAM of which 800 were hired from outside agencies. Another 300 brand-new Ambassador cars were purchased for the summit which the ITDC hopes to sell to state tourism corporations. The corporation also loaned its fleet of 20 Mercedes for heads of state. Another 40 had been imported specially by the Ministry of External Affairs.



A sumptuous suite at the Oberoi: no effort spared

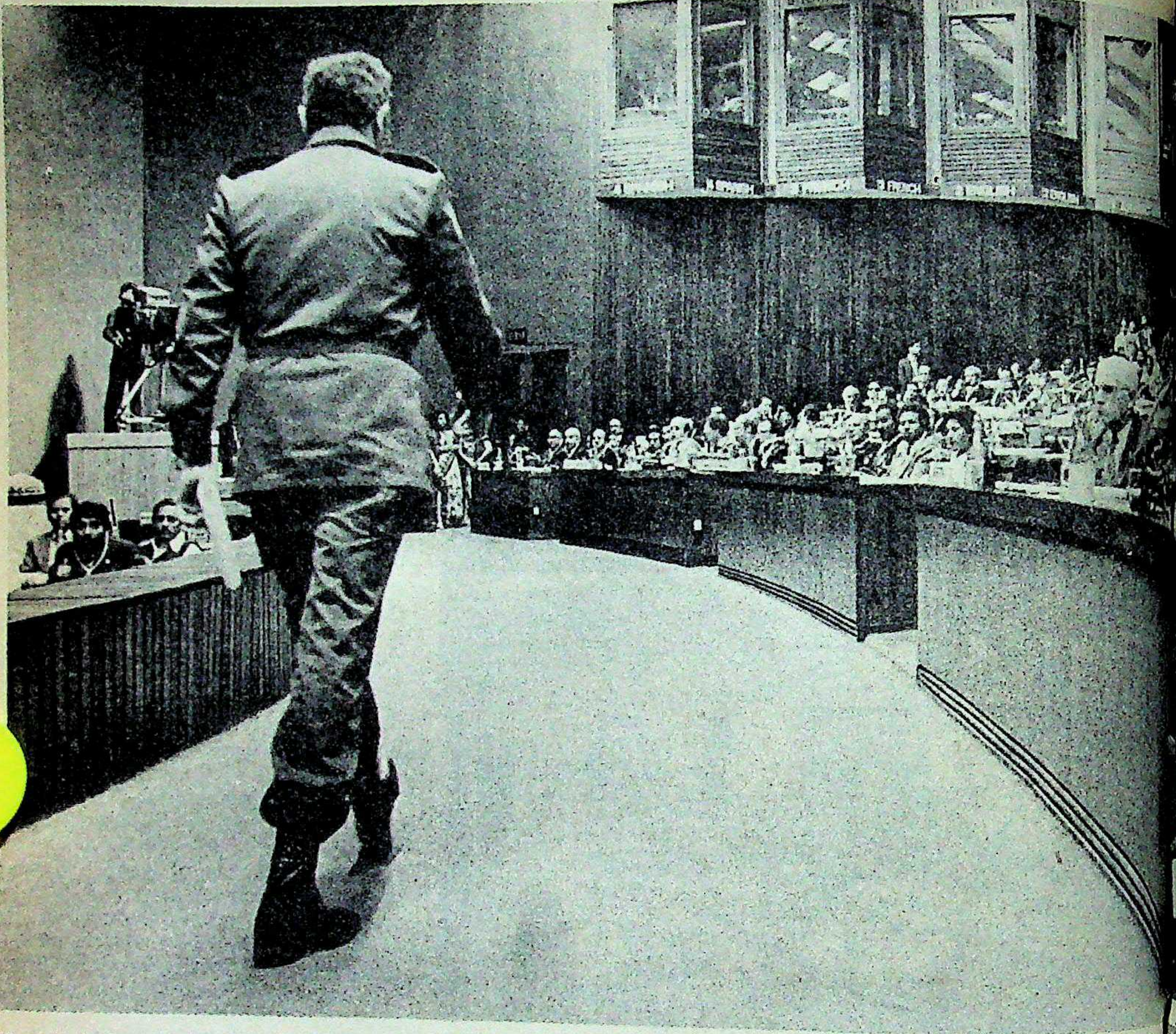
DESPITE the extensive services provided by the corporation, its officials, after preliminary calculations, imagine that they will break even. Even though food and drink at places like the media cafeteria in Vigyan Bhavan was being sold virtually at cost, the ITDC is charging delegations full rates for board, lodge and transport when their number exceeds the statutory five for whom hospitality is free. The average number of delegates per country works out to about 20, most of whom will end up paying for accommodation and services.

Restrained Entertainment: Given the low-key, serious nature of the working summit—with plenary sessions extending into late hours of the night—all entertainment was kept to a minimum. With the exception of folk and classical dances presented in the Convention Hall at Mrs Gandhi's opening banquet, few special entertainments were mounted. Social events were restrained to formal lunches and dinners hosted by either the Indian prime minister or cabinet ministers or foreign heads of state. These remained very much private and formal affairs.

About the only concessions to entertainment arranged by the ITDC were the two-day trips to Agra and Fatehpur Sikri on a special train called the Great Indian Rover. Vayudoot was also mobilised to provide flying visits to hill resorts like Kulu and Manali, Dehradun, Mussoorie and Hardwar. And apart from routine shopping trips for wives of heads of state to places like the Cottage Industries Emporium, and the organisation of a crafts bazar at the Ashok, diversions were restricted because they could escalate security risk.

Still, the conference bred a degree of conviviality. Given the cheaply available and easy flow of liquor and the accompanying camaraderie among delegates and media, some lighter moments were evident especially during the last two days of the conference when beer was on the house in the media centre lawn. Eight thousand bottles were consumed in a single day.

As for anecdotes more *risque*, it was not only Palestine Liberation Organisation's Yasser Arafat who created a bit of a stir in a luxury hotel, by hugging pretty Indian hostesses when they garlanded him in welcome. Most of the female reception desk and public relations employees in hotels found themselves being sweetly propositioned with gifts of bouquets and ready invitations to dinner. Room service attendants were given handsome gold watches and Rs 500 each as tips, a level of generosity which has become standard at such meets. But for a meeting which featured such a vast diversity of high flying leaders, among them intellectuals, orators and eccentrics, there was a singular dearth of hijinx. Life behind the elaborate security screen erected around the VVIPs turned out to be as straight-laced as a tea dance.



RAGHU RAI

War. And, the crisis has hit the developed countries, which have tightened their purse-strings, no less than the developing world. It was for this reason that the Algerians sought and obtained from NAM, a division of the economic demands into two: an immediate programme of action and a longer perspective on starting global negotiations which will obviously take time to achieve.

Doubtful Efficacy: There is no guarantee, of course, that the immediate demands will be met. They aren't new, nor are the industrial countries in a relenting mood. Whatever clout the Third World had from its command of world oil has been frittered away by bickering among oil exporters and the steep fall in oil prices. Yet, to emphasise their immediate demands, the conference asked specifically for:

- ► an increase in official aid to 0.7 per cent of the GNP of industrial countries, a target laid down more than a decade ago but still unachieved;
- ► urgent action to ward off unmanageable foreign exchange debts among developing countries;
- ► increased quotas and resources from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and less stringent conditions in making them available to developing countries;
- ► a substantial increase in World lending programmes and more resou the World Bank;
- ► easier access for developing cou ports into industrial nations; and
- ► more money for energy deve and food production.

The Indian draft on the subject a mention of these immediate goals, p instead to leave the whole business of eco mic change to summit-level global n tions. The Indian view w the industrial nations simply decline to consid proposals saying that would be discussed at the negotiations anyway. B contrary view prevailed wanted to safeguard im requirements without for discussions which may not get off the

If the industrialised Western bloc has all along considered NAM a beggar's opera with a cast of milling millions, the strident symphony raised at New Delhi clearly indicated that they can no longer turn a deaf ear.

chairman Fidel Castro returns to his after handing over to Mrs Gandhi: a new beginning

ly enough.

If there was any area of disappointment, in NAM's efforts to promote economic ration among developing countries. South cooperation, as it is known in rgon of international conferences, has ently failed to take proper shape be- the oil exporters have steadfastly refu- finance it. Funds like the one set up by ait and Saudi Arabia for promoting ects in developing countries, have merely ed in token programmes of a few hun- million dollars—a mere fraction of their oil surpluses of several hundred bil- dollars, most of which is invested in the Confronted with demands for con- onal aid in the past, OPEC countries were to try and hedge, calling for studies and investigations. At New Delhi, with Saudi Arabia firmly in charge, they were categorical in their response: with oil prices having tumbled by a quarter, OPEC surpluses have shrunk so much that there could be no question of OPEC-funded development banks or more low interest aid to fellow NAM members.

Possible Breakthrough: Yet, NAM brought forward the germ of an idea which, if it catches on, could begin to dwarf the more conventional problems. Seminal ideas generally need long periods of gestation and progress is often counted in decades. The very first summit in Belgrade in 1961 gave rise to the United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which is holding its seventh meeting in Belgrade this summer. Ten years ago, at Algiers, the movement initiated the idea of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Though it has yet to be achieved, the demand for NIEO has spawned a series of discussions and results.

At New Delhi, the cry has gone out for a "new, equitable and universal international monetary system" which, the final declaration says, "would put an end to the dominance of certain reserve currencies, guarantee developing countries a role in decision-making, while ensuring monetary and financial discipline in the developed countries and preferential treatment for developing countries"

What the New Delhi economic declaration called for was a radical transformation of the 40-year-old economic system which came off the drawing boards at Bretton Woods in the US in the last months of the Second World War—a time, as the declaration says—"when economic and political conditions were vastly different and only a few developing countries were sovereign, independent nations" and "the developing countries had an inadequate share of decision-making. . . ." The new structure, which hasn't been spelt out, would end the dominance of the dollar and a handful of currencies in world trade, sharp exchange rate fluctuations and the dependence of developing countries on the developed. It would give Third World multitudes a voice in global economic affairs.

Balanced Conclusions: In the final analysis, what the summit achieved was to keep NAM basically anti-imperialist; detached it from its "spiritual closeness" to the USSR without depreciating Moscow's contributions to the decolonisation processes; held the USSR no less responsible for the arms race than the US; nudged the Afghan and Kampuchean crises considerably closer to a political settlement; brought the Arabs closer together, at least for the moment; increased the prospects of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) being able to hold its twice disrupted summit, and sought to mobilise—with what success remains to be seen—the developing nations on a platform of collective self-help, self-sufficiency and in their economic bargaining with the North.

As *Newsweek* commented, the bulk of the final document was devoted to the five D's—decolonisation, development, disarmament, detente, and democratisation (freedom from superpower interference)—the watchwords of the movement. But viewed in perspective, the final draft and the hard bargaining that had gone into it, represented an impressive list of positive results for a movement whose epitaph has been written on many a tombstone years ago. If the industrialised Western bloc has all along considered NAM a beggar's opera with a cast of milling millions, the strident symphony raised at New Delhi clearly indicated that they can no longer turn a deaf ear.

Most observers of the movement are convinced that NAM has arrived at the crossroads. Whether it takes the high road or the low one largely depends on one person—Mrs Indira Gandhi. As she herself commented in her final speech at the end of the summit: "If you have selected me as the locomotive to pull the non-aligned train along, I will ensure that it does not go off the rails." But it will take all her diplomatic skill and political acumen to wrestle the movement onto its desired course.

Dealing with squabbling factions in her domestic role is child's play compared to the ruffled feathers she will have to smoothen in her new international role as head of history's largest movement. And yet, viewed against the array of state heads present at the summit, Mrs Gandhi undoubtedly retained the most stature, a stature that will grow correspondingly with the kind of moves she makes as head of NAM.

For all the flamboyant displays of Arafat and Castro linking hands and flashing the "V" sign, the bitterness of the Iran-Iraq enmity and the Kampuchean question, if the summit proved anything it was the degree and desire of conciliation. In the intimate atmosphere of a summit like last fortnight's, the pressure to sink differences and the motivation to find ways out of intractable issues is a tangible force that, in a world riven by rivalry and war, represents NAM's biggest asset as well as its potential global clout. An objective head count showed that NAM's inner strength, and Mrs Gandhi's now, lies in the growing number of moderates who people the movement. Mrs Gandhi's place in history is already assured but if she can mould the movement into what its principles and its original founders envisioned, the writing of that history will be considerably ennobled.

—DILIP BOBB with BHABANI SEN GUPTA

ASSAM

Reaping The Whirlwind

HITESWAR Saikia was last fortnight trying to settle into the hottest seat in India—the chief ministership of Assam. The diminutive, balding politician had been selected to lead a ministry that had obtained one of India's largest-ever majorities—91 seats out of 109. But the mandate had come drenched in blood, and ridden on an abysmally low voter turn-out, and the newly-installed Congress(I) ministers were clearly uneasy about the task confronting them.

Saikia was clearly being singled out by the Congress(I) Government in Delhi for his proven administrative ability—he had been an efficient home minister of the state between 1970 and 1977. But he was being asked to deliver a host of impossibilities—to repair the torn social fabric in Assam, to manoeuvre the leaders of the anti-foreigners agitation back to the negotiating table, to control the anarchic law and order situation prevailing throughout the Brahmaputra Valley, to contain the growing communal and ethnic violence that continued to explode sporadically, and to deliver relief and rehabilitation to at least 4 lakh people displaced by the insensate carnage.

Hiteswar Saikia is being asked to deliver a host of impossibilities:

- **to repair the torn social fabric in Assam;**
- **to manoeuvre the agitators back to the negotiating table;**
- **to control the anarchic law and order situation;**
- **to contain communal and ethnic violence; and**
- **to deliver relief to at least 4 lakh people.**

Careful Moves: During the first ten days of his ministry, Saikia moved cautiously, maintaining a studiedly low profile and yet conveying an impression of determination. More than two weeks after the Assembly elections had climaxed with the blood-letting at Nellie, crippled communications and simmering ethnic disaffection ensured that the state provided happy hunting grounds for an array of agents *provocateur*.

While Saikia tried to defuse sentiment against the state police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) by asking for an estimated 15,000 soldiers from four army divisions to be deployed in seven trouble-torn districts, he also moved to tone up the administration by transferring the district commissioners of Darrang, Nowgong and Lakhimpur, and the superintendents of police of Nowgong and Darrang. "Good sense will finally prevail," said Saikia, "and I am immediately tightening border vigilance to prevent infiltration by transferring the office of the IGP (Border) from Gauhati to Dhubri in Goalpara district, and by setting up a new DIG (Border) at Karimganj in Cachar district." Although Saikia said he would not increase security protection for ministers and party MLA's, who may be prone to attack by anti-government mobs, he nevertheless carried out substantial reshuffles in the state police administration.

But the chief minister, who suffers from poor health, faces the immediate problem of recognition by the Assamese. When ministers travelled to relief camps to oversee rehabilitation, entire areas they were scheduled to pass through were clamped under 'janata' bandhs and black-outs by the hostile population. On March 8, the agitation leaders announced that they would not participate in any talks in Delhi in which the Saikia Ministry was represented—a condition placed by Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi.

Refugee Problem: The biggest headache confronting the ministry was the rehabilitation of the refugees uprooted by the violence. Sethi himself estimated that 2.3 lakh people had been forced to flee their homes throughout the Valley because of arson or terrorisation. Although Saikia asked the Centre to grant Rs 25 crore for relief measures, he got only Rs 5 crore. "Out of that," he said, "we will have to spend over Rs 1 crore just to restore communications."

More than 250 makeshift relief camps were set up to house the growing tide of refugees as the Government belatedly began to put its plans into operation. Inevitably, the relief operations were accompanied by allegations from both the Assamese and the Bengalis that they were being discriminated against by the administration. In many areas, supplies of rice could not reach ly enough because of disrupted road

Another thorn in the ministry's was the continuing hostility of the bureaucracy, much of which had openly with the anti-election agi Although the agitationists' 18-day non operation movement ended on Febru government employees returned to only in trickles; many had been dismi arrested for refusing to participate in tion duties.

Rival Claims: Within the Cong Legislature Party, Saikia faced trouble fr Harendra Nath Talukdar, president of state party unit. Talukdar had repo obtained the support of a majority MLA's, but the party high command in made its preference for Saikia clear.

Saikia denies that such differences "There was some interest in leadersh admits, "but everybody is cooperati There are two ex-chief ministers, A Taimur and Keshab Gogoi, in my C and both are working very hard. My now will be to ensure assimilatio Assamese sections. The agitators are about 'indigenous' people. Who is nous? Even the indigenous people, bals, feel insecure today. I have rep stressed that the doors are open to the tors and I am willing to talk to them

Meanwhile, intriguing trends emerging in the All Assam Students (AASU) and All Assam Gana S Parishad (AAGSP) post-election s Although agitation leaders said their volunteers were concentrating work until March 19, a series of be statements streamed from their prop machinery, foremost among which demand that the state Government not allow "foreigners" who had fled to gee camps in West Bengal to return, repeated accusation that "indigenous mese were being ignored by relief

AASU President Prafulla Maha AAGSP Convenor Atul Bora, who ed along with AASU General Secretary Phukan and other ranking agitation on February 22 by the Gauhati High from National Security Act (NSA) on, were busy touring the worst-affected Assamese areas in Nowgong district since there were fresh arrest warrants out for them.

Phukan emerged from concealment on 6 to talk about strategy for the future. March 3, AASU had confounded observers when it supported a bandh called by the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) in Kokrajhar in Goalpara district. The PTCA had contested the elections despite AASU's efforts to dissuade it, but party leader Samar Brahma Choudhury had suffered a humiliating defeat in his stronghold at Kokrajhar (East). Moreover, the PTCA is dominated by the Boros, who had clashed bloodily with anti-poll Assamese villagers in the Gohpur area in Darrang district.

Enlisting Support: Yet, the agitation leaders were plainly anxious to enlist the support of the tribals after the elections. Joy Nath Sarma of the Sweccha Sevak Bahini (SSB), AASU's "volunteer force", said that AASU did not agree with the PTCA's demand for a tribal Union territory called 'Udayachal'. "But we welcome support from anybody who shares our feelings against the foreigners," he said.

"The Boro Students Union and the Mishing Students Union support our anti-foreigners movement," said Phukan. "We have formed peace committees in the

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ELECTIONS

Winning On Points

THE FIGURES, for once, did not lie. When Chief Electoral Officer S.L. Khosla released detailed results of the Assam elections last fortnight, it was clear that the Congress(I) had swept one of history's most transparently illegitimate elections.

In the end the party secured 87 seats out of 105 for which polling could be conducted. It had earlier won four seats uncontested when no opposition candidate came up to file his nomination against the ruling party's men in the Patacharkuchi, Boko, Palasbari constituencies in Kamrup district, and the Mangaldoi constituency in Darrang district. The Left and Democratic Alliance (LDA) which had staked its political survival in Assam on the elections, won only five seats in a defeat characterised by the humiliating rout of the communist parties.

Diminished Electorate: State-wide polling averaged a miserable 32.76 per cent, versus 66.85 per cent in the 1978 Assembly elections. Both elections were conducted on the basis of the same electoral rolls—the basis for the agitation that has rocked Assam since 1979. Only in Cachar (62.31 per cent), North Cachar Hills (56.12 per cent) and Goalpara (58.47 per cent) was polling normal. In Kamrup and Nowgong districts, where the Congress(I) had hoped to draw out substantial pockets of Bengali voters polling nevertheless averaged only 25.61 per cent. The turnout was laughable in Sibsagar district (5.47 per cent), Lakhimpur district (3.49 per cent) and Dibrugarh district (17.31 per cent)—areas where the anti-election Assamese population dominated.

In 28 constituencies in the districts of Kamrup, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, the Congress(I) won 26 seats, the other two going to independent candidates, on an average voter turnout of 3.8 per cent. Dharmapur constituency in Kamrup, where the party's Dr Bhumidhar Barman won all 266 valid votes cast, was added to in notoriety by a string of other improbabilities. In the Bokakhat constituency in Sibsagar, Dharmeswar Hazarika won 1,418 of the 1,517 votes cast (total voter turnout: 2.56 per cent).

At Khumtai, Jiba Kanta Gogoi won 934 votes out of 987 cast in a total voter turnout of 1.53 per cent. At Titabor, also in Sibsagar, Joy Chandra Bora won 1,540 out of 1,691 votes cast in a total voter turnout of 2.48 per cent. At Bihpuria, Borgoram Deori won 425 of the 437 votes cast in a turnout averaging 0.69 per cent. The pattern was repeated at Dhakuakhan in Lakhimpur, where Ragunath Pamegam won 587 out of the 640 votes cast in a voter turnout averaging 0.85 per cent, and at Dhemaji where Durgeswar Patir won 327 of the 358 votes cast in a turnout averaging a pathetic 0.40 per cent.

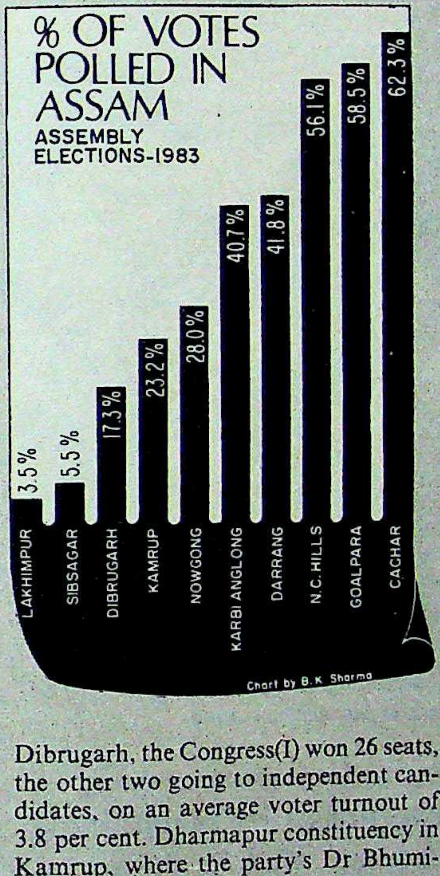


Chart by B.K. Sharma

Adverse Conditions: In the end, polling in 16 constituencies had to be postponed indefinitely because of impossible conditions. Khosla said that re-polling would be held before June this year. Polling in the Biswanath constituency in Darrang district had to be countermanded when Congress(I) candidate Satya Narayan Ram was killed by anti-poll agitators on February 15.

The postponed polling led to the continuing vacancy of seven Lok Sabha seats out of the 12 for which by-elections had been held. All five parliamentary seats that could be filled were won by the Congress(I), three of them giving the candidates an average of 9.78 per cent of the total possible votes. At the bottom end, Tarun Gogoi won the Jorhat seat with 36,836 votes out of 6,76,595 registered voters in the constituency.

There were other milestones in this exercise of a "constitutional imperative". Polling averaged below 10 per cent in 30 per cent of the total constituencies, and below 20 per cent in 44 per cent of the total constituencies. The Patacharkuchi seat was won uncontested by tobacco-seller Rabiram Das in a constituency that has given Assam some of its best academic luminaries. Moreover, Patacharkuchi is dominated by upper-caste Assamese Hindus who are stoutly opposed to the elections, and Das happens to be totally dark horse.

Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia won the Nazira seat in Sibsagar district with 9,005 votes out of a total of 13,065 polled; polling averaged only 22.56 per cent in his constituency. At Dibrugarh, former chief minister Keshab Chandra Gogoi won with 4,905 votes out of a total of 5,334 cast in a total voter turnout of 8.71 per cent. Only Anwara Taimur, another ex-chief minister, retained her Dalgaon seat in a predominantly immigrant area with 15,605 votes out of 33,099 cast. Even there she faced a reduced voter enthusiasm—in the 1978 elections she had won 23,028 votes out of 44,913 polled.

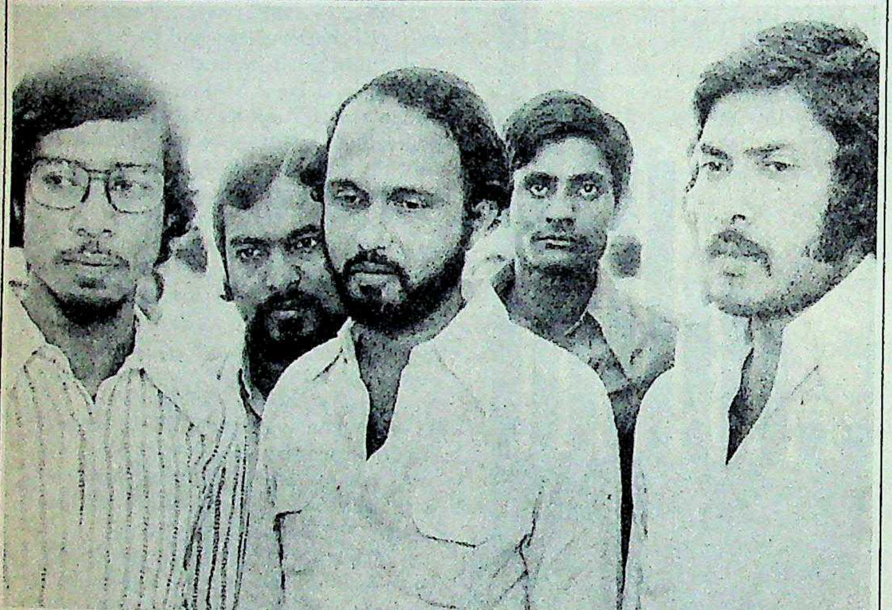
Gohpur area." Phukan was less forthcoming about AASU's plans, saying the executive committee would meet after March 15 to chalk out a strategy. "I feel our strategy should be changed," he said, "to fight a long-term battle. The atmosphere is altogether changed now."

AASU spokesmen, however, were anxious to point out that they represented all 'indigenous' Assamese—including the tribals and the tea-garden labourers who come mostly from Bihar and Orissa. By fortnight's end, a strange new alignment was visible when both the Boro Students Union and the Lalung Darbar issued strong statements demanding expulsion of all foreigners from tribal lands. Although the Lalungs were directly involved in the Nellie massacre, they blamed a secondary tribe, the Saraniyas, for the carnage— and the PTCA said all violence against immigrants had been perpetrated by agitationists.

Propaganda Blitz: As the fortnight ended with a reduction in the daily deathcount, AASU launched a new propaganda blitz. Six members of the union, led by Dr D.P. Barooah, quietly entered Delhi on March 5. Their mission: to tie up with the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU), which is dominated by the pro-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) youth wing, the Janata Vidyarthi Morcha, and to organise a demonstration to coincide with the inauguration of the seventh Non-aligned conference.

Barooah, who heads the Department of Political Science and Journalism in Gauhati University, has emerged as AASU's leading ideologue. The AASU delegation carried copies of a neatly-printed "open letter" to the heads of the non-aligned countries meeting in Delhi, and the students' first illustrated pamphlet in more than two years, titled 'Today's Assam: A Graveyard of Democracy'.

The open letter was signed by Mahanta and Phukan, and marshalled a clever argument asking basically that the non-aligned countries raise the Assam issue in the conference "on humanitarian grounds". Citing the "grim tragedy inflicted on our people in the name of an exercise in democracy with indiscriminate use of bullets and bayonets", the letter said the Assam carnage was worse than the Sharpeville killings in South Africa decades ago that had "roused the democratic conscience of the international community". AASU also claimed that its stand on the aliens issue was "far more democratic than the post-war Potsdam Agreement of August 2,


PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

AASU leaders Phukan and Mahanta: intransigent stand

It is clear that the agitation leaders were seeking to keep up pressure on the Government by maintaining an atmosphere of rumour and panic, and by ensuring that violence continued in short staccato burst.

SSB

Out For Blood

THE ATMOSPHERE in t
kened room is tense. One
the 10 men seated on ca
bring out a list of accusations ag
"national press". "You have al
up the Nellie massacre," says on
Nellie's victims were all Muslim
about Assamese Hindus killed
pur? What about Assamese Hind
near Mangaldoi?"

The room is dominated by a
man sitting with a grim smile on
There is something innocuous ab
Nath Sarma, 26, a certain under
of anger and hatred. But Sarma
Sarva Adhinayak of the Swecch
Bahini (SSB), ostensibly the volun
rce of the All Assam Students
(AASU), but in reality a well-org
paramilitary force that has very
fully carried out propaganda
nation and military-style attacks
migrant areas in Darrang, No
Goalpara and Kamrup districts
Brahmaputra Valley.

Organised Violence: The SSB's
effectiveness was proved last f
when Darrang district authoriti
vered a two-week-old massacre
grant Muslims in the Chaw
Chhapuri area alongside the B
putra. Chawlkhowa is not very
Sipajhar town, where the first
anti-election violence had expl
February 2, and Sipajhar is only
from Joy Nath Sarma's home
thekerabari village.

Sporadic clashes betwe
Assamese and the immigran
Sipajhar peaked on February 1
Joy Nath Sarma's younger broth
Sarma led a large and armed
immigrants in Chawlkhowa C
Dariaghati and Dhaulpur, atta
three waves from Sipajhar, R
and Kuruwa. Journalists trave
rough Sipajhar on February 1
polling was scheduled in the tro
constituency—were invited to
tion ceremony for Daya Sarma,
of his lieutenants, Jatin Saharia
Kumar Bora.

AASU members in Sipajhar, b
let slip that Daya Sarma had go
sten-gun to "rescue" some "kid
Assamese from the immigrant
Implicit was the fact that he h
but the mourners were anxious

that the immigrants had, after Daya's ammunition ran out, cast a fishing net over him and hacked him to death with daos (machetes).

The Chawlkhowa operation was expertly executed. All access to the immigrant settlements had been cut off earlier by anti-election agitators. For more than two weeks no news of the massacre reached the outside world. Only on March 2 when two injured victims staggered into Mangaldoi, only 25 km away, did a police patrol set out for the massacre area.

Rising Toll: By March 5 the shocked district administration had discovered badly decomposed bodies and skeletons, and officials estimated at least 300 were had been buried hastily by surviving villagers because of decomposition. Significantly, Chawlkhowa is only 15 km from Nellie in Nowgong district across the Brahmaputra, and it had preceded the larger Nellie outrage by three days.

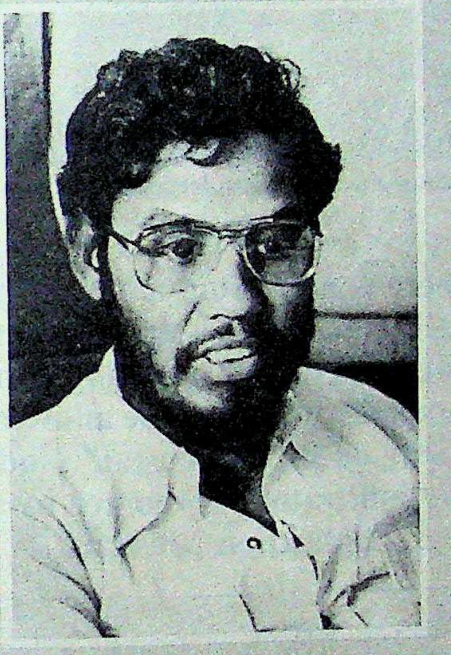
Stunned intelligence men in Gauhati are only now talking of the SSB's organisational skills. The Bahini's role in much of the frenzied ethnic violence that tore Assam apart last month had been conjectured. But sources now say that the Bahini has plans to keep up pressure through organised violence in the foreseeable future, too.

The SSB was quietly created in May by AASU to "identify foreigners". It took root initially in the Mangaldoi area, but spread rapidly to the entire Brahmaputra Valley. It was put in charge of drawing up plans to issue identity cards to "bona fide citizens". AASU announced on May 27, 1980, however, that the agitation would take "action in self-defence" against "minority attacks". This followed Assamese-immigrant clashes in Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara districts the previous day when the All Assam Minorities Students Union (AAMSU) and the Citizens' Rights Preservation Committee (CRPC) organised a Demands Day and took out processions. At least 35 people were killed in group clashes and police firing, and the SSB began in earnest to prepare for a protracted armed struggle.

Throughout last month's violence, Sarma was being held in Silchar Jail under the National Security Act (NSA). But his cadres had been sufficiently prepared for action. His release under parole for a week was a pre-condition imposed by AASU for participation in the last round of talks with the Government in early January.

A militant member of the AASU executive committee, Sarma is a recognised member of the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS). After he obtained his law degree, he was appointed a lower-division assistant in the Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) by his mentor Umanath Sarma, the then chairman of the board, who became president of the state Bharatiya Janata Party unit after he retired in 1981. The same year Joy Nath Sarma was dismissed from service for his overt involvement in the agitation.

Shadowy Connections: Sources say that SSB volunteers have built links with another shadowy underground organisation, the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (JRB), which is affiliated to the Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad (JYCP), the youth wing of the right-wing Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal (AJD). SSB volunteers have received weapons training from JRB men who have visited northern Burma for help from the rebels there.



Sarma: extreme views

SSB men are trained, say sources, to organise a sustained underground movement, to operate firearms, to plan and conduct raids on immigrant areas, to cut off communications to vital spots by burning bridges, snapping telephone lines and setting up road blocks, and to man an efficient communications system that relies on squads of "bicycle telegraph" men who carry SSB and AASU diktats to the remotest villages.

Sarma was released from NSA detention by the Gauhati High Court on March 2; the same day, however, he was rearrested under Case 28/83 registered under the Jalukbari Police Station. The Jalukbari case followed a police raid on the AASU office in the Gauhati University campus on January 25, which broke up a meeting being held by fugitive AASU leaders with representatives of the Khasi Students Union from Meghalaya. At the meeting plans to cripple communications between Gauhati and Shillong during the elections were discussed.

On March 5, however, Sarma was released by the chief judicial magistrate (CJM) in Gauhati. "The Government does not know how to keep us in jail," laughs Sarma in his hideout near Rail Gate. "The Jalukbari case was registered on January 25, but my re-arrest on March 2 was confirmed by an executive magistrate under the Assam Executive Magistrates (Temporary Powers) Act, 1983, which was promulgated only on January 28. When I pointed this out the CJM had no option but to nullify my arrest orders."

Formidable Organisation: "Every SSB volunteer is a soldier of peace, a symbol of non-violence," says Sarma, "but we are also active guards of our motherland. Each district has two or more sub-divisional units, and between five and 11 regional units. Today we have totally more than 30 regional units in the valley and at least 15,000 volunteers."

Sarma accuses Indira Gandhi of fomenting differences between communities in Assam. "Immigrants have been settled in *char* areas under Indian Army auspices," alleges Sarma, "and in the early '70s the Government gave shelter to pro-Mujibur Rahman guerrillas of the Mukti Bahini to train in Assam. Today those men know our geography well, and have formed a secret Razakar Bahini that has infiltrated certain areas to raid and kill Assamese villagers. The Indian Government is giving Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) uniforms to these infiltrators and the Government is releasing fake CRPF men caught by villagers."

But the SSB knows its geography very well, too, and Sarma offers a hand-drawn map as evidence. Map-maker Deepak Das of the 'volunteer force' has autographed his creation, and the map shows large areas around Barpeta, in Kamrup district, that are shaded to show "heavily populated foreigner villages" that Sarma claims surround "threatened" Assamese pockets.

Last fortnight Sarma and his lieutenants were busy mapping out strategy from his "tactical headquarters". "It is a natural truth that all of us will die," he says, "but what Mrs Gandhi has unleashed will result in untold bloodshed. We will gladly die for a great cause."

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

1945", and ended by beseeching the heads of government assembled in Delhi to "consider how far the expression of grief by the international community over the Assam carnage should extend to the point of possible friendly succour on human rights considerations".

Efforts: In the event the AASU delegation got nowhere near any non-aligned leader, but its plans showed how far it was willing to go in order to embarrass the Government. The accompanying pamphlet, too, concentrated on Assamese victims of the violence that had ripped Assam apart last month, and ended with the current AASU slogan: "Save Assam today to save India tomorrow".

Barooah symbolises the confusing welter of political camps that infest the top ranks of the AASU leadership. Until the agitation began in 1979 he was an acknowledged member of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, but has now switched to a rigid stand against the Communists. Mahanta and Phukan head the moderate section, which is not averse to an eventual adjustment with the Central Government, and which carefully insists that all illegal immigrants after 1971, whether Muslim or Hindu, should be deported to Bangladesh.

But the moderates are facing increasing hostility from a strong lobby within AASU, led by Joy Nath Sarma, that supposedly has links with the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS). This group has gained tremendous leverage during the elections, and makes a fine distinction between "refugees", meaning Hindus who ought by rights to be allowed to stay on in "Hindustan", and "infiltrators", who are by implication Muslims.

A THIRD lobby is backed by the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML)—in particular by the Vinod Mishra group of 'Bhojpur Naxalites' who are currently engaged in an active policy of "annihilation of class enemies" in the Patna-Gaya areas in Bihar. On March 4, two AASU representatives, Jayanta Das and Gulam Murtaza Ahmed, travelled to Calcutta to address a public meeting organised by the Indian People's Front, a countrywide organisation that is building up support among agricultural labourers and the unorganised industrial sector—and is affiliated to the Mishra faction of Naxalites. Nagen Sarma, an AASU adviser, says that there is nothing wrong in accepting support from the CPI(ML). "AASU is willing to take help from anybody who supports this national cause," he says, "but we are non-political and are not prepared to be exploited."

The BJP and the RSS have gained substantial support among the Assamese upper-caste Hindus who constitute the bulk of the agitators. In 1982 alone the state BJP unit, says Bansilal Sonee, party observer for the North-eastern region, gained 40,000 members. BJP President Atal Behari Vajpayee, along with Rajya Sabha MP Jaswant Singh, visited Assam for the sixth time last fortnight to visit refugee camps, and the state unit's vice-president Dr Jogeshwar Mahanta, raised the curtain on the visit by claiming that "indigenous" Assamese in Nowgong district were in grave danger of being liquidated by "foreigners".

Graffiti warns: "Drive out foreigners from Assam"

There is a growing lobby within AASU that makes a fine distinction between "refugees" meaning Hindus who ought by right to be allowed to stay on in "Hindustan" and "infiltrators", who are by implication Muslims.

Off the busy Paltan Bazar area in Gauhati, in the local RSS headquarters at Keshav Dham, was the organisation's Akhil Bharatiya Bouddhik Pramukh (all India intellectual coordinator). Kupphalli Seetharamiah Sudarshan is a suave man with considerable knowledge of the situation in Assam. On March 8, Sudarshan chaired a meeting of local shakha heads and was given reports on the requirements in the relief camps. The RSS's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha is meeting in Nagpur from March 18 to 20 to discuss how to "ameliorate Assam's agony". On March 5, the RSS headquarters in Delhi announced the formation of a 'Sangharsh Peedit Sahayata Samiti' to render aid in the strife-torn state.

Emerging Strategy: It was clear that the RSS is beginning to shape a strategy for Assam that is finding favour with a section of the agitation leadership. "I been insisting that AASU should reth strategy," says Sudarshan. "I feel the tors should concentrate upon foreig trators. Refugees can be allowed to s humanitarian considerations. The A movement has to be made an all-India ment."

The RSS now has 200 shakhas i North-east, says Sudarshan, with mor 130 in Assam alone. Sudarsh been accompanied on his to disturbed areas by Dr Sujit D the Vishwa Hindu Parishad The VHP has been concentrat Karbi Anglong district, trying t the tribals away from mission fluence. Last year it revived a ritual called *bafangrangkher* th been forgotten for 50 years and nised a big festival at Phool Karbi Anglong.

The RSS is helping sharpe ethnic divisions that have now pe nently damaged the Assamese structure. But there are other c fugal forces at work, apart fro Assamese, the tribals and the B lis, in a process that might eve result in a dismemberment of the

New Movements: Last for reports indicated that the Aho now girding up for a struggle to their own state in Upper Assam districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsag Dibrugarh. The Ujani Ahom Parishad argues that this state take in the outlines of the anci Ahom kingdom. The Ahoms Assam for 600 years, and trac descent to Buddhist Thais. O years they have been assimilated into mese society, but many Ahom leade privately argue that the Hindu Assa Assam were either imported from pla Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh or converte within.

Simultaneously, there has been to revive the Phralung Buddhist cult the Ahoms, who are otherwise Assam's Brahminical stream. The have already demanded recognitio Scheduled Tribe and reservation of mentary seats under the tribal quota. the Tai Historical and Cultural Socie brated its silver jubilee in 1980, it inv ambassadors to India from Thailand and Burma.

In Dibrugarh, a Tai language institute is busy trying to revive the language, which has almost become Sources in Gauhati say that if the A become very militant about their de might create tremendous problems particularly because many key posts in the state administ- Chief Minister Saikia himself is an Saikia is a military title bestowed by kings on the commander of a hun-

Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi sultory two-day visit to Assam on 11 and 12 to inspect relief measures, was clearly trying to cover up its in Assam with a series of transpa- While attempting to minimise of the Assam holocaust on the country and abroad, the Govern- tried to apportion blame. Con- the three advisers to Governor Mehrotra are being blamed in news "leaks" for not having the violence efficiently. The district rations and the state bureaucracy singled out for censure. An over- of the intelligence set-up in the state at.

after the elections ended, Sethi that future talks with the agita- would include representatives minorities, the tribals, and the new ministry. Between the Govern- the agitation leaders stood the Ministry—and the agitationists were about not recognising the legi- of the new government. The stand- hostile and intractable, and the Go- sources said, would not give on the modalities of future talks the agitation leaders first held out an by making some token concess-

the fortnight progressed, it was clear agitation leaders were seeking up pressure on the Govern- maintaining an atmosphere and panic, and by ensuring continued to crackle in bursts. But Prime Minister Gandhi's inclination has to not to succumb to such and she was taking a hard the continuing violence.

is obviously required is corrective and conciliatory from both sides. Within the ra- itself, the Saikia Ministry caught in a vice, between a Centre and an intransigent The experience of the last shows that 'popular' Con- ministries in the state have ut- to touch even the fringe of With the Non-aligned out of the way, therefore, it that the ball was firmly in Gandhi's court, and she would make the first move in this pe- —CHAITANYA KALBAG

CACHAR

Pulling Away

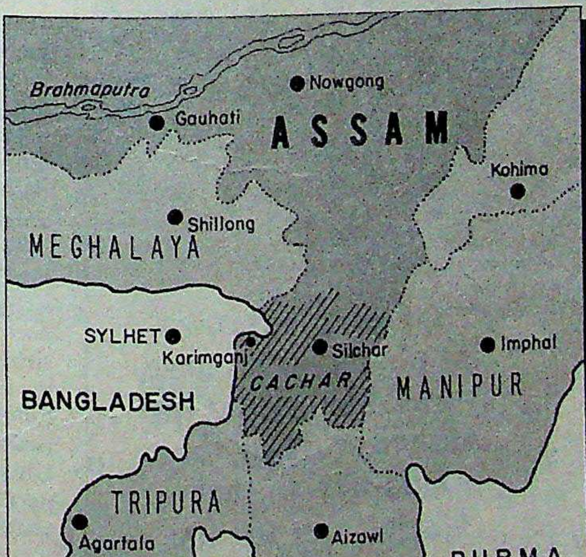
CACHAR district has always suffered from an agonising schizophrenia in regard to Assam. Overwhelmingly Bengali in both population and character, it has been totally alienated **from the Assamese 'mainland' over the last three years—only Cachar voters exercised their franchise in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections, and there is no sign of the anti-foreigners agitation.** "Cachar is just like Bengal," says Monoranjan Dey, who owns a photogrphic studio in the Premtala area. "There is no trouble here, only peace."

Last month, the savage ethnic violence that tore the Brahmaputra Valley apart revived talk in Cachar of the Government's plans to partition Assam into Assamese, tribal and Bengali segments—the most obvious Bengali territory being Cachar (area: 6,962 sq km, estimated population in 1983: 2.5 million). When the Congress(I)-affiliated National Students' Union of India leader Partha Ranjan Chakraborty met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her electoral trip to Silchar on February 10, he asked her for a separate university for Cachar. Her response was to ask whether he wanted a Cachar university or a Cachar state.

Contrary Pulls: Ironically, the populous districts of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) and Cachar were part of the Bengal province until 1874, when the British merged them with the newly-annexed Assam in order to make that territory viable, economically and demographically. The Bengalis in the two districts however insisted that they would retain their affiliation with Calcutta university and high court—a factor that helped maintain a higher rate of literacy among the Assamese Bengalis. This dichotomy continued until 1947 and the Sylhet and Cachar district Congress committees owed allegiance to the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

A referendum in June 1947 in Sylhet resulted in that district's merger with East Pakistan. Sylhet had been Assam's most populous district, comprising almost one-third of the state's total population. Only three and a half police thanas from Sylhet were merged with the contiguous Cachar because they held a dominant Hindu population. But the Assamese were uneasy about Cachar's continuing presence in their midst; Ambicagiri Rai Chaudhuri, the founder of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, suggested that Cachar too should go to East Pakistan.

These contrary pulls surfaced at other times. When the States Reorganisation Committee under Fazal Ali, Hridaynath Kunzru and K.M. Panicker was at work in 1955–56, the Cachar Congress leadership demanded the district's separation from Assam. Eight years earlier, soon after Partition, there had been a demand that a composite 'Congress' state, 'Purbanchal' be formed from the Cachar, Manipur, Tripura and the Lushai Hills district of Assam.



Map by B.K. Sharma

"Sylhet was thrown out of Assam because it was dominating the Assamese," says Dr Lutfur Rahman, a former minister and an active member of the Congress(S). "Now they would like to throw Cachar out for similar reasons." A former principal of the Cachar College, Deba Brata Datta feels that the trouble lies elsewhere. "The seeds of this alienation were sown when the British merged Sylhet and Cachar with Assam in 1874," he says. "They did not think of the linguistic and cultural factors."

Legitimate Fears: Although many leaders of opinion in Silchar, Cachar's headquarters, feel privately that separation of the district from Assam is inevitable, there is also a strong section that opposes the move. A body called the Union Territory Demand Committee, led by Paritosh Pal Choudhury, has failed to gain many supporters. "People will accept separation with resignation," says Dr Binay Krishna Bhattacharya, principal of Cachar College. "We must learn to live together, or perish." Mahitosh Purkayastha, who has on earlier occasions campaigned for Cachar's separation, now says: "What will we gain if we separate? There will be unemployment and pressure on land. Bengalis get the majority of jobs in the Brahmaputra Valley, in the railways, posts and telegraphs, coalfields, oilfields, banks and so on. Such opportunities will dry up."

Economically, Cachar is one of Assam's more backward districts. It contains 114 of Assam's 769 tea plantations, but its mainstay is rice cultivation. The anti-foreigners agitation has led to skyrocketing prices of all essential commodities in the district because of impeded movement through the Valley. And as far as employment goes, Bengalis from Cachar are already finding it difficult to get jobs in the Brahmaputra Valley. Covert discrimination in favour of "sons of the soil" has kept many public sector and governmental posts vacant, and in Gauhati University many departments have deliberately not been expanded so as to prevent Bengali candidates from getting jobs.

WHERE Cachar has most starkly differed from the Valley is in relation to language. The Assam Official Language Act, 1960, which made Assamese the lingua franca throughout the state, was greeted by language riots in Cachar and in Bengali areas in the Valley. A formula evolved by Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Union home minister, led to the insertion of an amendment that kept Bengali as Cachar's official language. In 1972, when Gauhati University decided to make Assamese the medium of instruction throughout the state, another strong movement in Cachar succeeded in retaining Bengali as the medium in that district.

On December 30 last year, however, only a week before the elections were announced, the Assam Secondary Education Board (ASEB) issued a circular saying that Assamese would henceforth be a compulsory third language in all Cachar schools from class eight onwards. In contrast, schools in the Brahmaputra Valley continue to have Hindi as the third language. The Cachar Shiksha Sanrakshan Samiti sent a strongly worded protest on January 30, calling the move "academically unsound, discriminatory, undemocratic, politically motivated, impractical and unsuited to the needs of modern life"; and the directive has been kept in temporary abeyance.

Communal Cleavage: Sources in Silchar say that even if the Government does not bestow Union territory status on Cachar, it might still decide to merge the distri neighbouring Tripura, where the population constitutes 70 per cent total. Either move will almost certain a strong protest from Cachar's Bengali population. The Muslims constitute around 35 per cent of population, dominating the rural Although Muslims occupy the top in the three Mahakuma Parishads bodies) that administer the distric form a minority in the district adm tion. Both a separate Union territory or merger with Tripura will result in a reduction in Muslim influence.

The Muslim leadership in the therefore, favours continuation of Assam—because, together with the grant Muslim population in the Valley can better safeguard their interests fears have led to a firming of Mus ment; in the recent elections, vo Alkapur, Hailakandi and Silchar te favour Muslim candidates—preferab the Congress(I)—in a clearly delineation. Even in Karimganj town tionally an opposition stronghold, newcomer to politics from the Cong was voted in because he happened on Muslim minority fears. As a re such minority swings, eight of the 15 MLA's in the new Assembly are Mu

Losses: Educationally, Cachar has suffered the most becaus anti-foreigners movement in the Although educational institutions normally even at the height of the in the Valley, Cachar's students 1979–80 academic year because of nation cancellations and will now probably suffer a loss of the year 1982–83 too; examinations for schools and colleges, scheduled for month, have not been announced

Discrimination against Cachar in admissions to Gauhati Unive number of meritorious candidates physics post-graduate course had admitted last year only after Vice cellor Jamini Choudhury interve deepened Cachar's siege mentality to their woes, Cachar's graduates been informed that West Bengal's sities will no longer grant in post-graduate courses because follows a two-year degree course Attacks on Bengali students in University hostels have held back parents from sending their children state capital.

"Basically, the Assam agita ended up in demanding the extir all Bengali refugees because they in trade and employment," says udhury, head of the history depa

"What will we gain if we separate? There will be unemployment and pressure on land. Bengalis get the majority of jobs in the Brahmaputra Valley …. Such opportunities will dry up."

—MAHITOSH PURKAYASTHA
former Congress minister

"Sylhet was thrown out of Assam because it was dominating the Assamese. Now they would like to throw Cachar out for the same reasons."

—DR LUTFUR RAHMAN
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Charan College. "The Assamese
if Assam's Bengalis are united it
very difficult for them to get a
al state."
Rivalry: The growing Assamese-
rift is summed up by a senior aca-
in Gauhati. "Suddenly," he says,
Assamese have discovered that the
constitute the third largest linguistic
ty in Asia, after the Chinese and
di speakers. In addition, looking at
tical development in West Bengal,
and Bangladesh, the Assamese feel
Bengalis subscribe to two un-
political schools—Marxist or
tarian. So, fears about engulfment
Bengalis have been cleverly
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ether or not Cachar is ulti-
separated from Assam, it
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Nor are the ethnic, cultural
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in 1792, when Ahom king
Nath Singh begged the
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sion, the British contingent
marched into Gauhati issued a
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March 1901, when Lord
visited Gauhati and was
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this province that sub-
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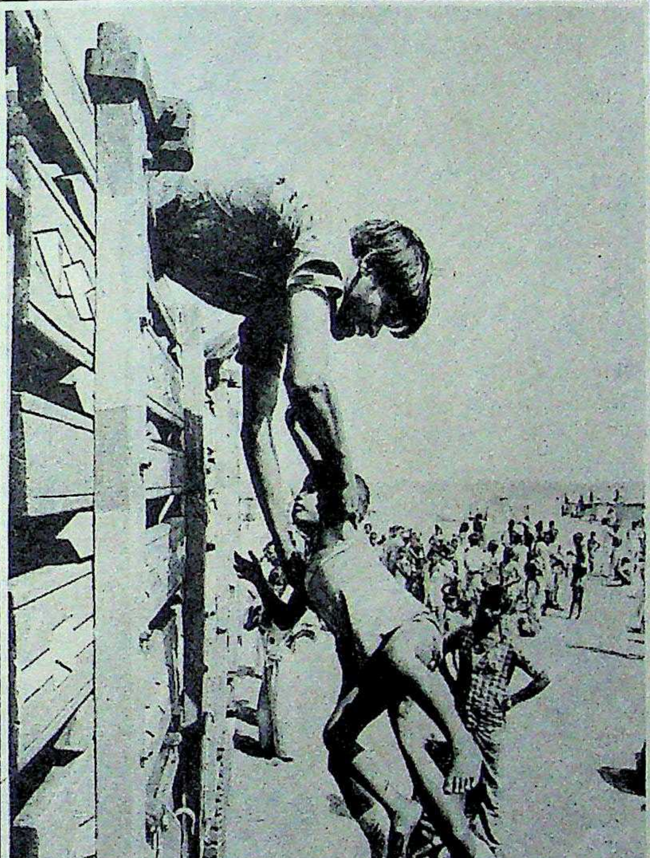
once again last fortnight
the Purbanchal Bank, one of
state's largest, opened a new
in Silchar. The agent of the
branch got hardly any ac-
at all—because he is
ese, and does not speak

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

REFUGEES

Flight To Safety

ONE FALL-OUT of the February carnage in Assam has been the exodus of large numbers of refugees, fleeing in fear from the scene of the killings, into districts of West Bengal adjoining Assam. This is not the first time that such an exodus has occurred; four years ago, the first refugee waves came when the Assam movement started for the expulsion of illegal foreign immigrants from Bangladesh. The last influx began in the wake of last month's elections. To assess the magnitude of the new outflow, and the mood of the refugees, Correspondent SUMANTA SEN *and Photographer* PRAMOD PUSHKARNA *travelled to the northern districts of West Bengal to talk to refugees and officials. Sen's report:*

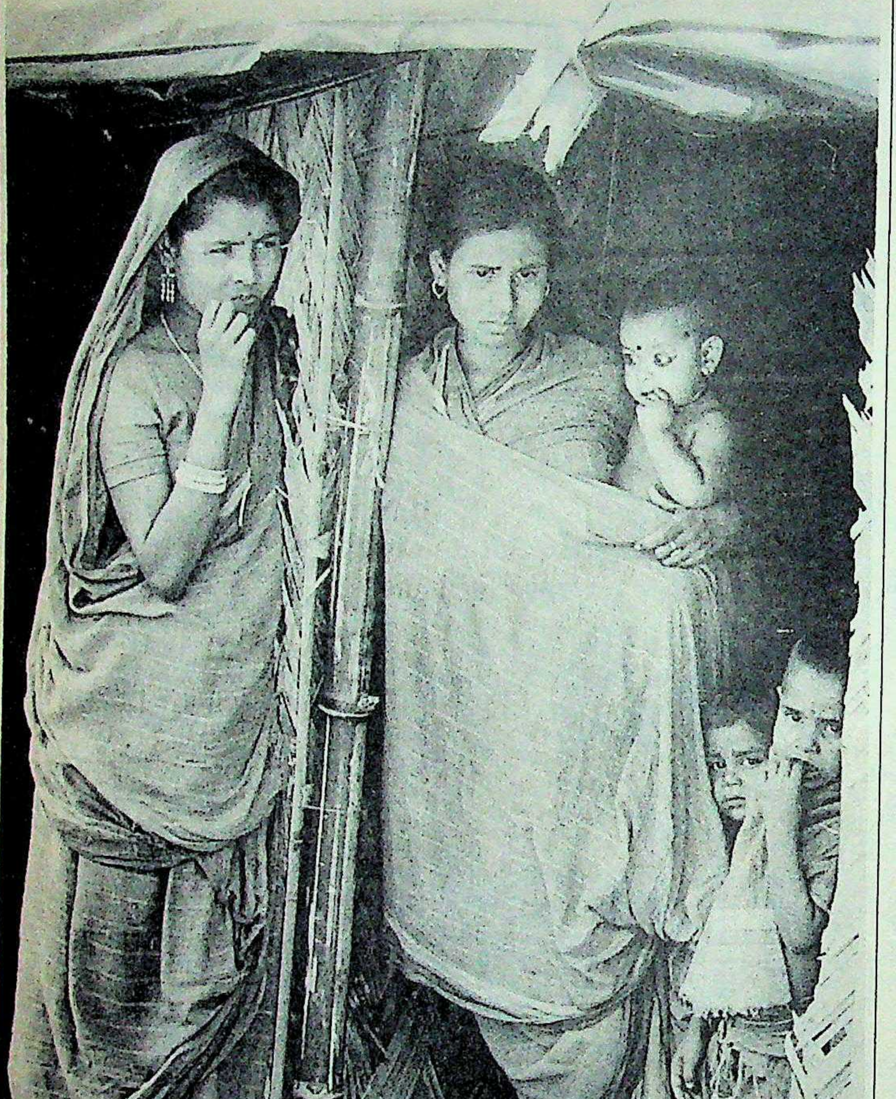


PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

They continue to arrive at West Bengal's Alipurduar Junction railway station to be packed from there in lorries for their new refuge. Last fortnight around 10,000 had arrived with more on the escape trail.

THE LORRIES keep on coming along the dusty road like so many cattle trucks. They wind their way past the Kohinoor tea estate to a vast ground filled with rows and rows of polythene topped sheds. It is the Dangi II camp in Alipurduar started to house the hapless thousands from Assam forced out of their homes and villages in the wake of the communal carnage that has engulfed their state. They continue to arrive at West Bengal's Alipurduar Junction railway station to be packed from there in lorries for their new refuge. Last fortnight around 10,000 had arrived and there were reports of more being on the escape trail, the West Bengal authorities went about the task of increasing the accommodation which had originally been planned to house 12,000. Said Sub-Divisional Officer P.K. Chowdhury: "Our reports are that many more will come and we have to keep and feed them until the time they want to return."

And very few would like to go back. Just as the 8,000 who had fled their homes in 1980 at the peak of the anti-foreigner agitation in Assam are still housed at what has come to be known as Dangi I, just adjacent to the new settlement. For three years now they have been living in thatched huts that have become worn with age and subsisting on the weekly Government dole of 2.5 kg of rice and Rs 5 per adult which in official parlance is called "special gratuitous relief". Quite clearly it isn't much of a life but as Haridas Chandra Debnath, 40, explained: "There is no way in which we can agree to return to our native places in Assam unless we know we will not be driven out



They live in thatched huts, subsisting on the weekly Government dole of two and a half kg of rice and Rs 5 per adult as "special gratuitous relief". Quite clearly it isn't much of a life.

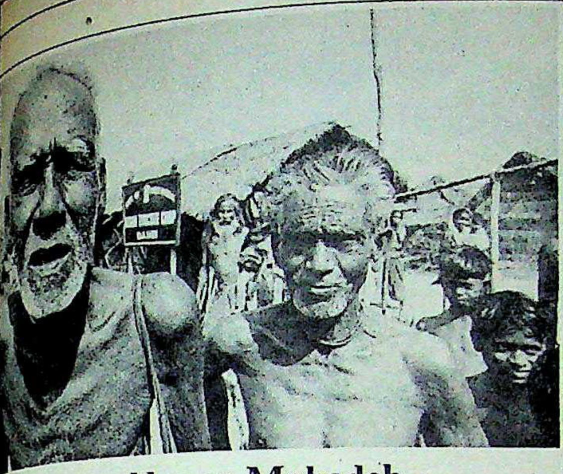
again." And at Dangi II, Narayan Roy, newly arrived from Baihata Kamrup district, said: "I swear I'll Assamese rice again." Roy echoed mates who, while looking abject their new surroundings, seem to common resolve: not to go back.

The pattern of the most recent makes it clear that the bulk of th have not left Assam temporarily. Th at the hurriedly set up control ro Alipurduar circuit house shows exodus began to gather momentum bruary 27 onwards, a full week Assam elections and when the situ eased a bit. The official explanati circuit house was: "Though alarm rioting around them, these people c to run away in a hurry leaving behi thing. It is clear that they planned th fairly certain that they will not ret Prafulla Chandra Burman and Chandra Manidas, just getting off t that brought them to the camp s could have left their homes in D strict much earlier but deliberated th sion. Said Burman, "We should ha earlier but we could not do so as we some time to gather all our belong organise our departure."

Sorry Plight: But that even c and planned departures can go a proved by the words of Naren Chan 38, who had to leave behind his t ghters. Das's story, told in his w typical. He said:

> "On February 18, following re threats from the Assamese we B of Khoriali decided to cross ov West Bengal. But just as we making our plans, our houses w tacked by people carrying torch we made fast for the nearby j Having reached there I found 10-year-old son and an 18-mon daughter missing. They, how turned up the next day when we about to proceed towards the ra station. We left the jungle and ha through, at Dongpara, came a riotous mob and in front of my c my uncle and aunt were chop pieces with daos. We ran helter-s and later when we had reached th tion, I found my daughters, one nine and another four, missing looked for them, people told m had seen my daughters lying o ground with arrows in their bac

Asked why he himself had n back to look for his daughters, D "Then it was a question of each p himself." The betel-nut trader a land-owner turned overnight into a shed tears for his daughters afte



Said an old man Mahadeb Das: "The Assam authorities might have been cruel to us but we are sure that our fellow Bengalis will not act in the same manner."

At Dangi there are many broken families like Kanchan Bala Dey's who crossed from Nalbari with her children. With no information from her husband she is convinced she will never see him again.

ed the security of Dangi from the night- that is Assam today for the minorities.

Many of Dangi's newest inmates said would have preferred to remain in had they been more humanely treated. As Hemendra Mohan Roy, of Gores- village in Kamrup district, said: "We due to go to the polls on February 20. days before that the situation became tense with the Assamese repeatedly ening us with dire conse- ces if we participated in the . The deputy superinten- of police and the circle in- had come to our village we complained of these s and also the way in the local thana officer instigating the Assamese. ing, however, happened we became the targets of which began soon after officers had left."

Even so, Roy said he had ention of crossing over West Bengal and at first shelter at the local Gores- college where a camp of s had been started for le like us. "There we stayed open with nobody caring even when we were struck hailstorm. It was then that decided to come to West gal as we realised that no longer belonged to he said. Since then, Roy learned that the Goreswar camp had been set on fire by militants. Officials at the control room confirmed that incidents such as the destruction of the camp were also responsible for the somewhat late rise in the volume of exodus, as it comprised people who had decided to quit after making every effort to stay back.

Many of the camp inmates' stories made it clear that there were very definite and strong economic motives behind the urge to get rid of the Bengalis. As Hriday Chandra Nabadas, 61, who came to Darrang district from Mymensingh in the then East Pakistan 18 years ago, said: "I bought five bighas of land for Rs 400 a bigha. Today the same land is valued at Rs 2,000 a bigha and for quite some time people like us who had bought land cheap were feeling a growing resentment about this among the Assamese. Now they have got my land."

"When we reached the station my daughters were missing. People said that they were lying with arrows in their backs." Asked why he had not turned back Das replied: "It was each person for himself."

DANGI is not new to receiving Bengali refugees from Assam. The first influx took place in the wake of the 1960 riots when a few thousands had been provided shelter. It included men like Narayan Chandra Roy who have been forced to become refugees twice over. But they had returned to Assam and, in Roy's words: "There was no reprisal then." Then came 1980 to be followed by the present exodus, clearly the biggest, and under by far the more hostile circumstances. As the bullock-carts brought in more bamboo poles for additional homes at Dangi II, it appeared once again that West Bengal, plagued as it has always been with refugees since 1947, would have to bend a little more to take on its latest and seemingly permanent burden.

Nabadas, interestingly enough, is a refugee for the second time. The first time he left home at Mymensingh was in 1965 in the wake of the Indo-Pak war. "Then I was driven out by Muslims and this time I have lost my home to the Hindus," remarked Nabadas as he played cards with other refugees from the same village, perhaps the only way to while away the endless hours at their disposal.

As Nabadas and the others played cards, lorries continued to drive in throwing up dust storms. Many of the other inmates peered into the faces of the new arrivals to find out if those they had left behind in hurried bids to save lives, had come. And at Dangi there were many broken families like that of Kanchan Bala Dey who had crossed over with her children from Nalbari with no information about her husband Ranjit who was then away at Dumduma, 9 km away, visiting relatives. And Sudhir Das, a fish supplier from Mangaldoi, said he has yet to hear about his father who stayed a little distance away. And even as they looked among the new arrivals, people like Kanchan Bala and Sudhir Das appeared convinced they would not see their near ones again.

Grim Future: Though most of the inmates at Dangi are Hindus, there are also a fair number of Bengali Muslims all insisting that they had been living in Assam for generations and had nothing to do with "people who came during the time of Bangladesh." However, whether Hindus or Muslims the first thought as the tension of escape and arrival subsides is that of the future. Five rupees and 2.5 kg of rice a week certainly doesn't go a long way and as they look around for other means, the older inmates at neighbouring Dangi I come to their aid. Though the Government rules say that no refugee will be entitled to the special gratuitous relief if he stirs out of the camp, it is no secret that people from Dangi I have been going out to nearby Samuktola, 5 km away, or even Alipurduar, 15 km away, doing odd jobs here and there. And this is already causing tension with the local inhabitants unhappy at the fact that the refugees were seeking to eat into their meagre resources. The authorities at Alipurduar are aware of the goings-on and a senior police officer said: "While we do not fear any clashes with the locals, what is bothering us is that with the refugees continuing to stay they will sooner or later start felling trees in the adjacent reserve forests as that is an easy way of making money. And in such a situation we will have to take action."

Actually after three years in the camp, the older inhabitants at Dangi I are slowly turning out to be a problem with increasing demands on the authorities who have already paid well over Rs 4 crore in terms of cash assistance alone on them, with no compensation from the Centre. Now the newly laid out hutments at Dangi II are a further incitement for complaints of neglect, particularly as their own huts look dreary in co
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In a poverty ridden
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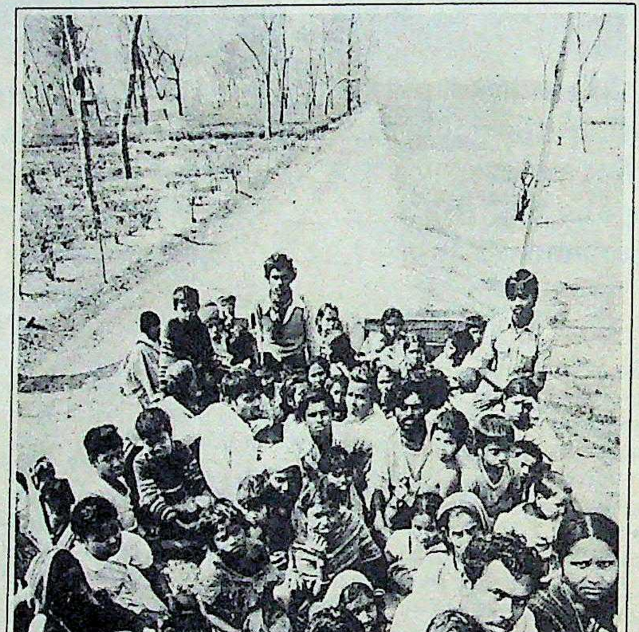

Said a resident of Alipurduar: "We hope the Government realises that these people from Assam are not the only ones with problems. A time may come when the inhabitants of Dangi may find themselves unwanted elsewhere too."

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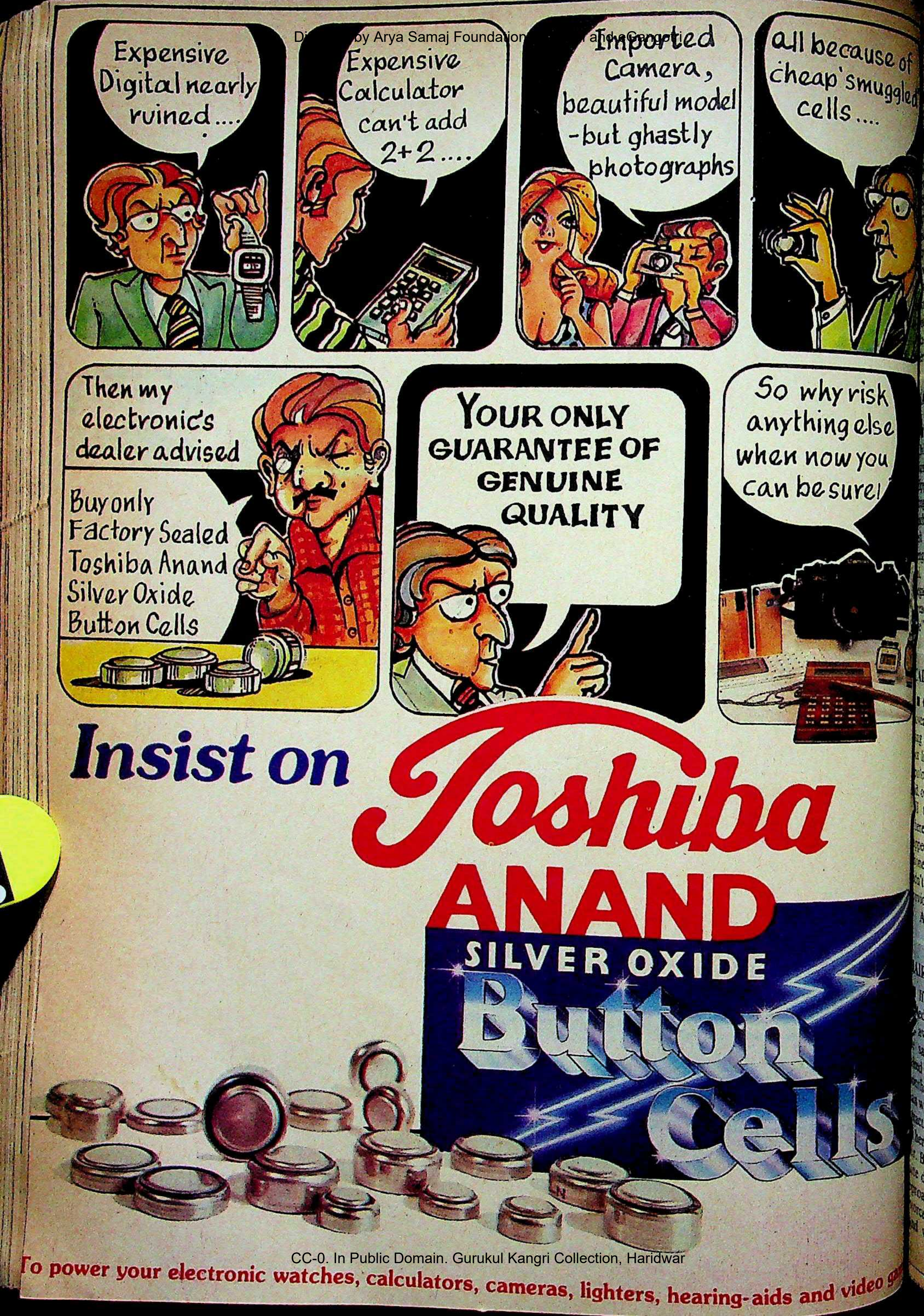
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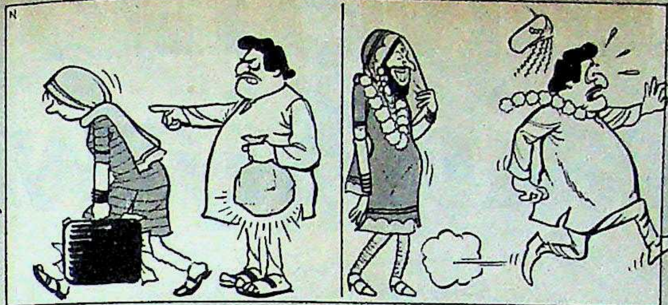
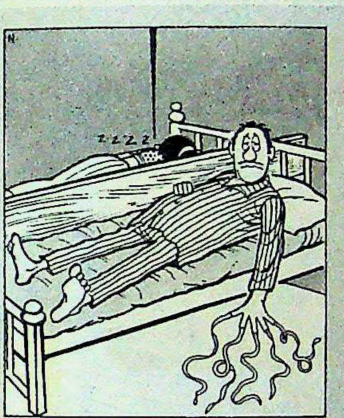


Once upon a time, there a farmer in Punjab. This anding young man hailed Gobindpura village in nda district and thought a good way to make ey—marry, get as much wry as possible, and aban- the girl. The first time he this plan into operation it rked to perfection: the g girl from a village near mpura Phul soon found elf back home and her family poorer by a considerable sum of money.

The second time, the entrepreneur settled on a girl from Nathowal village in Faridkot district. On the appointed day, he marched at the head of a large *barat* to the girl's home. What he didn't know was that the parents had heard of his earlier escapade and had decided to teach him a lesson.

Everything went smoothly, however, until the time came for the groom to look upon the sweet face of his bride for the first time. He was led to a room where his bride was sitting, surrounded by the usual cohort of giggling maids. Gently, he lifted the veil—and looked straight into the eyes of a slim, bearded lad.

ILED, AT LAST



Looking at Shridhar lal of Pune, anyone would t to reach for a pair of nail pers. The phenomenally tapering growths on h of the five fingers of his hand add up to a total th of 323.84 cm and Chil- 46, is not laughing. He an growing his nails as a ction to school discip-" and now, 26 years later, he is sick of his achievement.

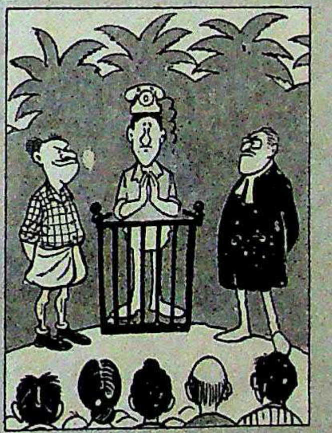
First, Chillal soon found that he couldn't sleep because he had to lie down very carefully in bed so as not to break the nails. This, he says, meant that for the last quarter century or so he has not slept the sleep of the just. Then, his social life is shot to pieces because his friends keep doing a graceful dance to get out of the way of those—ouch!—things. Chillal even had to give up his job as a photographer with the Maharashtra Agriculture Department when he found that nails and long tours didn't mix.

Now, Chillal, who is giving up all fond hopes of getting into the *Guinness Book of Records*, is going to make a beeline for the nearest manicurist and gift his 26-year plantation to a museum where it can be preserved for posterity.

LLED TO HEEL

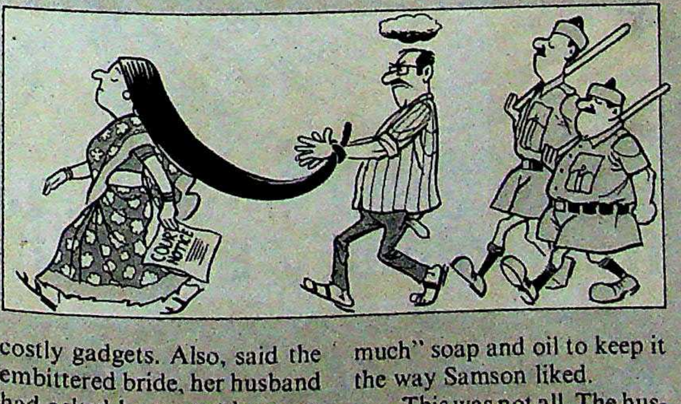
Can anyone imagine a ernment employee stang up in public, putting his little palms together and logising for something he or didn't do? This miracle take place in Kerala, re the High Court has ped the knuckles of a tele- es engineer because he 't move fast enough to ide a connection.

After a resident of Kozhencherry village had waited and waited for his telephone, he took the matter to court. The High Court, in its order dated January 28, asked the junior engineer of the Kozhencherry exchange to fix the phone *pronto*. When the junior engineer turned a deaf ear the villager moved the court to take action against the engineer for contempt of court. This galvanised the engineer into action and the villager's phone finally crackled to life on February 13.



The court was not willing to let it go at that. It found that there was "wanton disregard" of the January 28 order; moreover, a simple apology in court would not do: "We feel the apology must be made openly in a manner that reaches the local public of Kozhencherry. That may perhaps serve a larger purpose, as a deterrent to those who treat the orders of court with callous disregard and indifference."

AIR SPLITTING

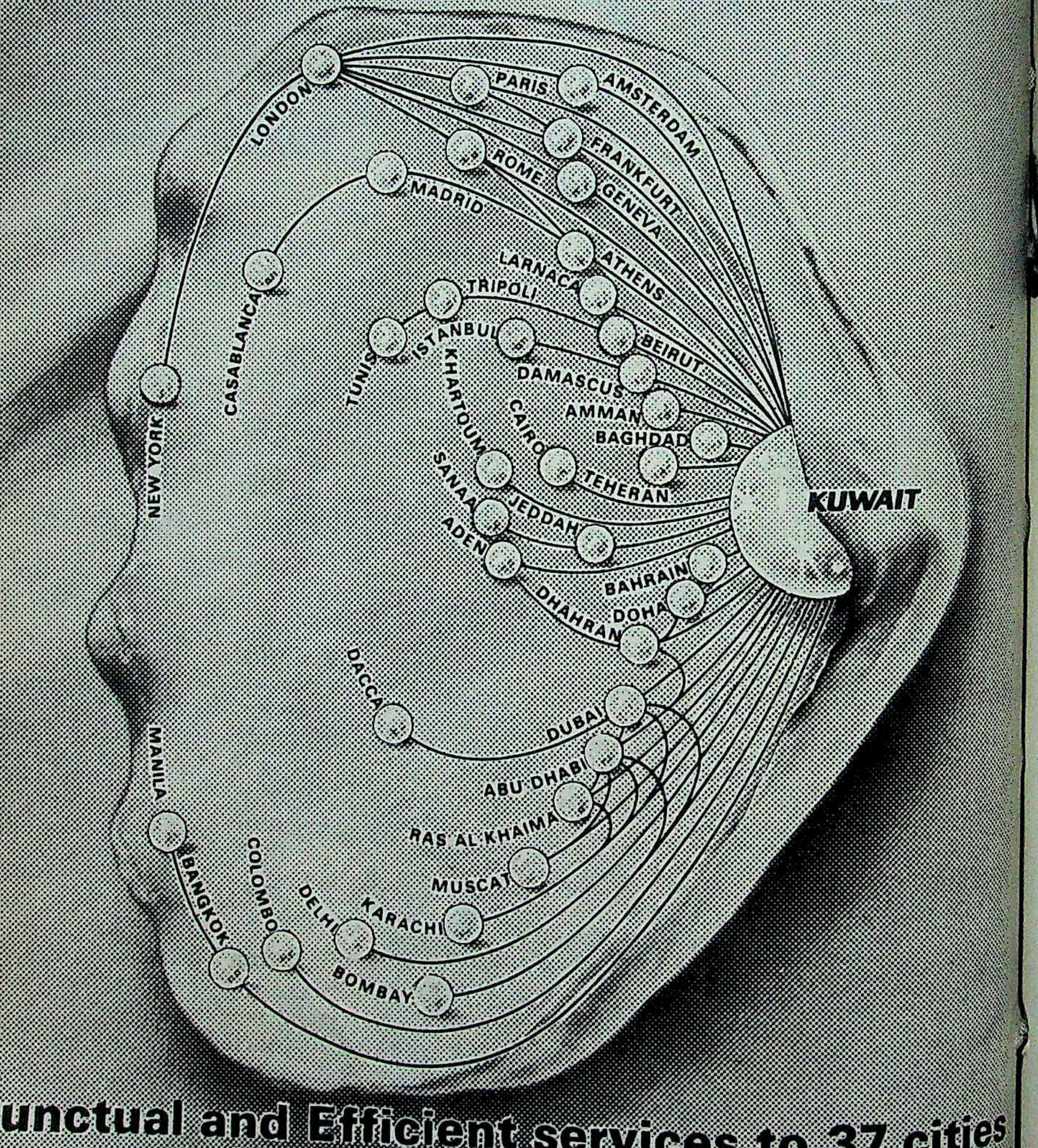


If any more proof were ed that prices are up, up away, it can be found in sad story of the longed divorcée. About seven ths ago in Pune a young n wedded a young woman, cted, among other things, her lustrous, knee-length . Before the holy fire had died down, the woman oached a court for a rce, saying that her husd was harassing her for costly gadgets. Also, said the embittered bride, her husband had asked her to cut her tresses because she was using "too much" soap and oil to keep it the way Samson liked.

This was not all. The husband had, according to his disillusioned wife, been up to other tricks. She said that he had given her a shampoo to use on her hair: the shampoo contained, besides the usual ingredients, a fair helping of DDT. This was supposed to stem the growth of the glowing tresses. The court said that this amounted to ill-treatment, and ordered the husband to pay the aggrieved wife an alimony of Rs 280 a month. That will presumably be enough for the soap and oil.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

Convenient Kuwait Airways.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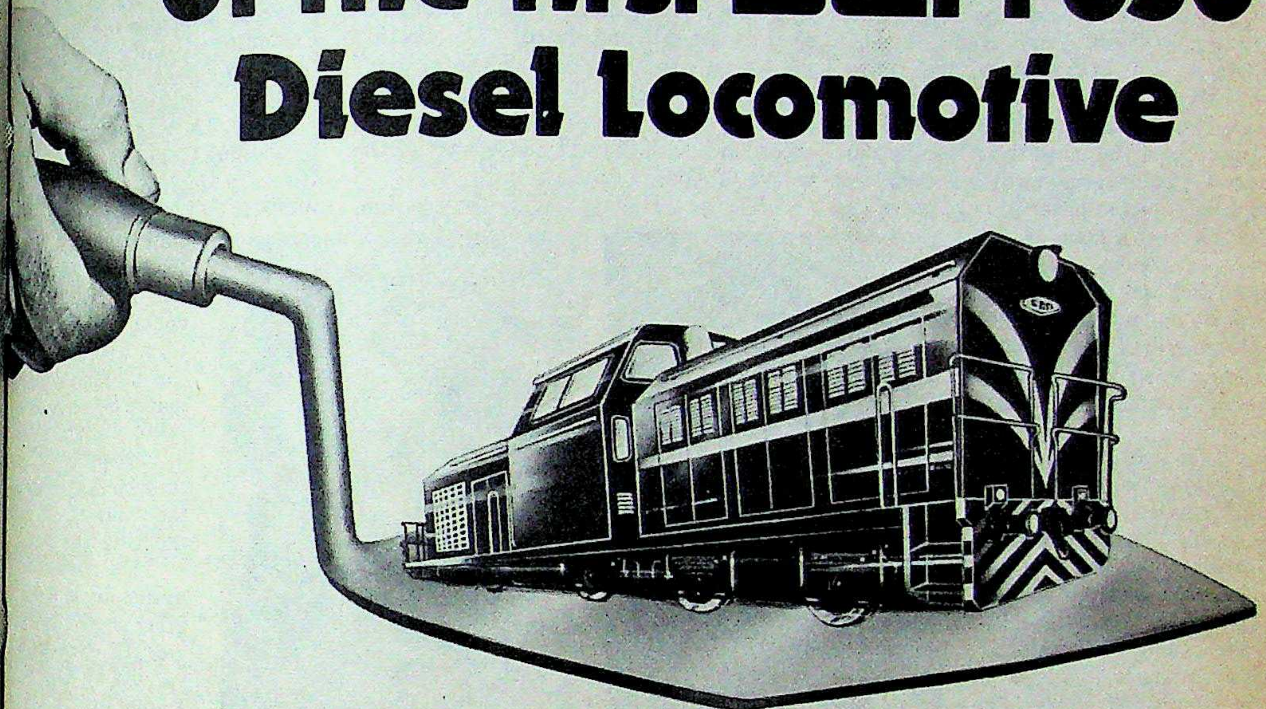

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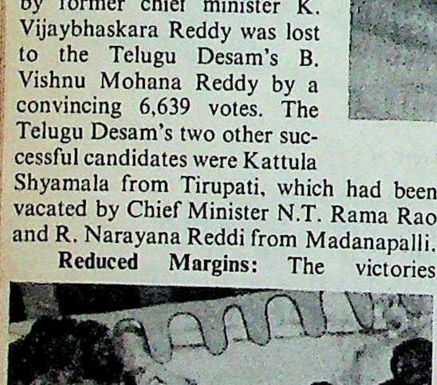
CONGRESS (I)

Signals From The South

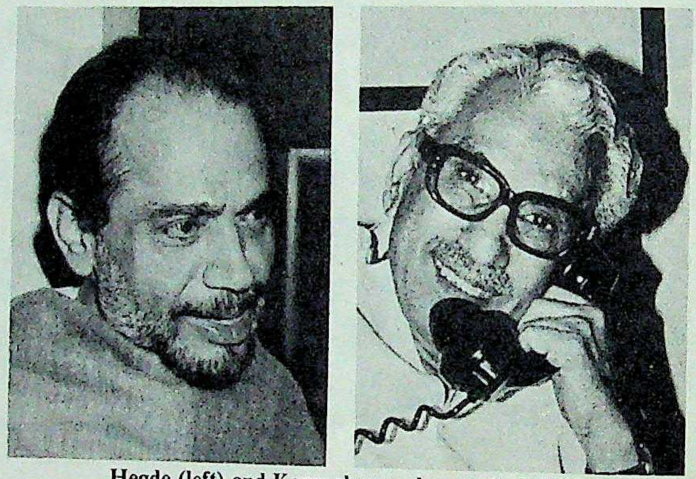
HARD on the heels of its rout in the south, the Congress(I) has received yet another jolt. Of the eight by-elections held last fortnight in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra, the ruling party won just two. As if that was not enough, two of its candidates in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu lost their deposits and two constituencies previously represented by Congress(I) chief ministers slipped out of its grasp. Of the remaining six, three were won by the Telugu Desam and one each by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

By far the worst was the Congress(I)'s performance in Andhra Pradesh where it lost all four by-elections. The Yemmiganur seat which had been won by former chief minister K. Vijaybhaskara Reddy was lost to the Telugu Desam's B. Vishnu Mohana Reddy by a convincing 6,639 votes. The Telugu Desam's two other successful candidates were Kattula Shyamala from Tirupati, which had been vacated by Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and R. Narayana Reddi from Madanapalli.

Reduced Margins: The victories brought the party's strength in the Assembly to 202 from 199 but there was a drop in the number of votes. In Tirupati the number dropped significantly from 45,000 in January to 10,922. The Telugu Desam victory was not unmarred—the prestigious Himayatnagar constituency, in the heart of Hyderabad, was lost to the BJP's A. Narendra by a massive margin of 28,134 votes (*see box*). The defeat was made more bitter by the fact that the Telugu Desam had won this seat in January. Rama Rao, however, looked at the brighter side and stated: "The election results are concrete proof of the people's continuing support to the party's programmes and policies which were framed in accordance with the will and wishes of the people of Andhra Pradesh."



Narendra: convincing margin



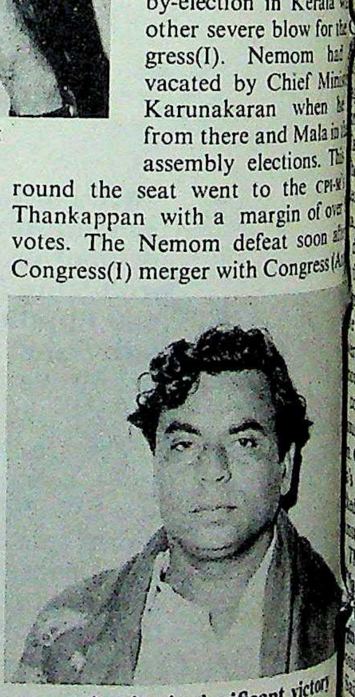
Hegde (left) and Karunakaran: lessons in defeat

If the Himayatnagar by-election, caused by the death of the incumbent, sent warning signals to the Telugu Desam, it hardly boded well for the Janata Party and the Congress(I), underscoring their loosening grip on urban areas. Of the 74,154 votes polled T. Lakshmikanthamma of the Congress(I) polled just 3,599 and N. Narasimha Reddy secured a dismal 2,794—and both candidates lost their deposits. While members of the Congress(I) and the Telugu Desam levelled charges of rigging at the BJP, Rama Rao said graciously: "I must honour the people's verdict." BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu shot back belligerently: "It is a BJP wave in the city and also a timely warning and censure given to Rama Rao's unilateral decisions." The Telugu Desam's convincing victory in the other three by-elections, however, reduce any such claims to the level of post-election euphoria.

In Tamil Nadu the south's other actor-turned-politician Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) also had cause for happiness. The AIADMK's R. Amritraj managed to retain the Tiruchendur seat, which had fallen vacant following the death of the party's S. Kesava Athithan, by a margin of over 1,700 votes. The victory margin seemed a bit small after the hectic campaigning done by MGR, his chief aide actress Jaya and several state cabinet ministers. T rivals did not do too well either—21 lo deposits, among them the Janata Nellai Jabemani and the Congress(I) Chandrasekhar.

Hectic Campaigns: The Cong performance was not surprising but powered campaign was. All India Co Committee-I (AICC-I) General Se G.K. Moopanar and Union Minis State B. Venkatasubbiah camped chendur. The party high command by sending Union Agriculture Minis Birendra Singh to campaign, conside minister had made himself unpopular state by adopting a stiff towards MGR's dema rice. But while the Cong could not have hoped form well in Tamil Na Janata Party's sorry mance was serious as pa sident Chandra Shekha a well-publicised pa through the south to re the "spirit of '77" and the party base in the so

The result of the N by-election in Kerala w other severe blow for the Congress(I). Nemom had vacated by Chief Minis Karunakaran when he from there and Mala in assembly elections. Th round the seat went to the CPI-M Thankappan with a margin of over votes. The Nemom defeat soon af Congress(I) merger with Congress(A



Amritraj: significant victory

was a definite setback for the United Democratic Front (UDF) (ment.

To win in Nemom the CPI-M Democratic Front (LDF) played the al card well. The 1982 candidate for Fabir Khan, was replaced by Tha a Nadar, who had a better chan

-dominated area. Not only did the LDF ... Hindu support but they also manage to attract Muslims who were disen- ... with the Congress(I) after the ... handling of the Trivandrum riots in ... The Nemom victory brings the ... strength in the 140-member Assembly to ... against the UDF's 77.

... Karnataka, the other Congress(I) ... to fall in January, held out against ... Congress(I) wave. The Congress(I)'s ... R. Raju managed to retain the Tarike- ... in January with the Janata Party getting ... only 21,809 votes of the 63,126 votes ... against the Congress(I)'s 38,516. The ... election was caused by the death of the in- ... bent.

...verse Verdict: In spite of this, the ... (I) victory was being interpreted as ... against the Janata Government and ... ably enough Chief Minister Rama- ... Hegde's resignation was demanded ... Congress(I) leaders. In a show of ... election bravado Congress(I) Legisla- ... Party leader Veerappa Moily said: "The ... the Tarikere by-election was the per- ... of the former Congress(I) govern- ... and the present Janata regime and the ... has given its ruling against the ... Party.

The Janata Party's defeat has also been ... to Hegde's lack of bold ad- ... decisions and S. Bangarappa's ... attitude to the Janata Govern- ... Significantly, Hegde did not campaign ... where the party's candidate was ... Kranti Ranga faction. Local rivalries ... to the party's troubles. Hanji Shiv- ... a prominent Janata leader of the area ... the party ticket and this along ... the fact that he was closely related to the ... (I) candidate made him opt out of ... electioneering. It seems that the state ... knowing of their slender ... of winning did not field Hegde from ... constituency though there is intense ... on him to seek popular mandate ... Caste factors also took their toll. The ... dominant Lingayat population ... the Congress(I)'s Lingayat candidate ... the Kumba candidate of the Janata. ... The Congress(I)'s victory in Maharash- ... constituency was its least trum- ... Dr Suresh Patil won with a 42,120 ... over his independent opponents; the ... parties did not field any candida- ... Suresh Kalmadi, a Congress(S) MP ... Rajya Sabha: "We did not attach any ... to this election because it would ... changed the political complexion of ... Victory or no victory, the Cong- ... itself is doing our job in Maha- ..." That, the results show, might well ... of the rest of the south too.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

ANDHRA PRADESH

Surprise Win

FOR THE fledgling Telugu Desam Ministry the loss of the Himayatnagar by-election last fortnight came as a severe blow. Though the party won the three other seats, the importance of the defeat in the heart of Hyderabad to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by a massive margin of 28,134 votes cannot be underestimated. The Telugu Desam candidate was P. Upendra, a close aide of Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao. To ensure his victory the party had brought in the chief minister's election agent from Gudivada and campaigning had been hectic. To make matters worse the ruling party had won this seat in January, though with a narrow margin.

Rama Rao: severe blow

The victory brings the BJP's strength in the 294-member Assembly to four. Said A. Narendra: "We are like four pillars to take the party to newer strength. After returning from giving thanks to Lord Venkateshwara at Tirupati, I will go around from door to door to thank the voters." This personal touch was evident all through the campaign. The party organised 45-member committees for most of the 14 polling stations and organised for workers to personally meet voters at least three times. The campaign was successful and on election day the BJP assistance desks were crowded with supporters.

The Telugu Desam's defeat has been put down to several factors. The choice of an outside candidate against the BJP's local one apparently worked against them. Also the alliance with the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and particularly the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Maslimeen also turned voters away. Said a BJP leader: "The Telugu Desam taking the open support of the communal Majlis and the communists made many votes swing our way. At one stage we had our fears as Rama Rao drew large crowds."

Allegations: Rama Rao, for his own part, minimised the defeat saying: "In Himayatnagar we have retained our strength as the votes polled are more than in the January election." His party workers and members of the Congress(I) were, however, not so satisfied and levelled charges of rigging at the BJP. Said Congress(I) candidate, T. Lakshmikanthamma, who had lost her deposit: "We heard of the plans to have voters impersonate others and our fears were confirmed when counting began. With only five, six and seven votes for the Congress(I) in a box it was clear that the BJP had rigged the polls and so we left the counting centre in protest. Surely the Congress vote cannot drop from 12,000 in January to just 3,600 now."

Lakshmikanthamma also complained to the chief electoral officer and the election commission. The police arrested a few party workers as complaints of attempted impersonation were filed but released them when the presiding officers did not file written complaints. BJP General Secretary Bandaru Dattatreya dismissed both parties as "spoil sports" and added that "they could not take defeat gracefully". At the personal level, however, candidates were more sporting: the Telugu Desam's Upendra visited Narendra in order to congratulate him.

The Telugu Desam retained Tirupati and wrested Yemmiganur from the Congress(I). The Yemmiganur win was surprising as this was supposed to have been the pocket borough of former chief minister K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy who vacated the seat when he was inducted into the Central Cabinet. The victory of the Telugu Desam's astrologer candidate B.V. Mohana Reddy must therefore have shaken the chief minister personally. In Madanapalli the Telugu Desam's R. Narayana Reddi won with 10,500 votes.

The Congress(I)'s dismal performance shows that it is yet to learn the lessons of January. Squabbles and petty rivalries surfaced again and even led to some degree of cross-voting. As usual immediately after the defeat, the resignation of the pradesh party chief G. Venkataswamy was demanded. Shot back Venkataswamy belligerently: "I have been president for only four months and before I resign I will make a statement as to who is responsible for the debacle." And the time has surely come for members of the Congress(I) in Andhra Pradesh to stand up and be counted.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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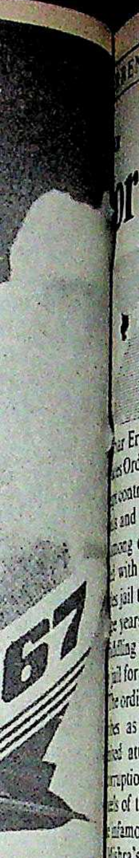

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or Appearance's Sake

CHIEF Minister Jagannath Mishra of Bihar has a solution for every problem. Last month, as the dissident campaign for his ouster reached alarming proportions, the Government promulgated ar Eradication of Specified Corrupt es Ordinance which, by striking down contractors, government employees, s and dealers in essential commodiong others, seeks to cleanse a state with the disease. The punishment s jail terms ranging from six months e years, with or without a fine—perling with transfers and postings can l for up to six months.

e ordinance, which the chief minister es as 'the first-ever ed attempt to root rruption, followed on s of the quiet death nfamous Bihar press Mishra's initiative has ith sneers from his ents, both inside and the Congress(I). ated dissident leader i Kumar Sharma: a desperate bid to up his own and his ers' corruption. Mishra tried to gag the press cases of corruption not be highlighted. e has enforced the rruption ordinance ect a clean image and e the people that his Government business."

ng Ordinance: Gimmick or not, if ented properly, the ordinance could salutary effect. The measure strikes at everybody, from the contractor who s the terms of his contracts or quietly es of materials supplied by the Public Department to people who manitransfers and postings.

g the way, it takes in the doctors or who neglect patients, charge exorbies and carry on a lucrative private e during office hours; the people in in manipulating tenders, fraudulent erwise; dealers who manipulate their f essential commodities; government s who cook muster rolls or make payfor fictitious work; and 'colonizers' egally transform agricultural land idential colonies. Any government aiding such people in their nefarious deeds will also have the book thrown at them.

Of all the provisions, the one relating to the transfers has provoked the most jeers. Secretariat sources say that it is mainly the politicians, legislators and ministers, regardless of party loyalties, who are busily securing transfers and postings. The sources said that immediately after becoming chief minister Mishra laid out a code of conduct for transfers and postings but this is violated with gay abandon. Mishra, however, says: "Everything will be taken care of now. Even the legislators and politicians who do a lot of *pairvi* (lobbying) would be booked under the ordinance and the same clause of punishment will apply to them."

Jagannath Mishra: whitewash attempt

Measures: Some politicians feel that the ordinance was the result of Mrs Gandhi's February 1 letter to all chief ministers calling for an attack on corruption at all levels. However, sources close to Mishra asserted that the ordinance was the culmination of a series of moves over the last three months. On January 11, he made a statement in the Assembly listing measures to cut red tape and eliminate corruption. He followed this up with the decentralisation of the vigilance machinery by constituting vigilance boards for each district headed by a judge.

However, as the boards will be dominated by district officials, critics complain that they will be able to do little in the way of vigilance, and suggest that the scheme had been devised to protect corrupt officials. The exercise did appear hollow in the light of the fact that Mishra himself had rehabilitated a number of senior officials suspended on corruption charges, and had reportedly harassed others with transfers because they had opposed dubious actions.

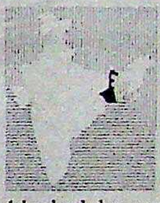
Procedure: The chief minister's plan of action also includes ministers. He announced in the Assembly that an inquiry could be started against a minister if at least 33 MLA's submitted detailed charges to the Assembly speaker. Fifteen days after this, the speaker would discuss the matter with leaders of all political parties. If they were satisfied that a prima facie case existed, the charges would be forwarded to the chief minister, who would initiate action. Again, opposition members feel that this measure was an attempt to silence members on the floor of the house and no charge would come to light.

The ordinance last month was thus the crowning glory of the Government's efforts to clean its Augean stables. The prevailing sentiment in the corridors of power in Patna, however, is one of practised cynicism. As a senior official of the Government puts it: "How can Mishra, through this ordinance, check all these malpractices, when the existing laws have failed to do so? The failure of one law, and its replacement by another beautifully-worded law cannot help improve the situation."

—FARZAND AHMED

WEST BENGAL

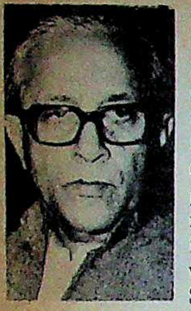
Strong-arm Tactics



THE SULLIED record of legislators' misdemeanour touched its nadir last fortnight as ailing West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu found the entry to his office in the legislature building blocked by squatting and slogan-shouting Congress(I) legislators. Finding the strain too great, Basu, who was just recovering from serious heart trouble, lost his normal poise and trembling with rage told the squatters: "I want to see which *baap ka beta* here can stop me from entering my room." As the chief minister managed to brush past Congress(I) haranguers, he narrowly missed the fate of his accompanying colleague Industry Minister Kanailal Bhattacharya who almost fell flat after being tripped soccer style. Adding to the insult, someone shouted "swine"—an epithet clearly aimed at Basu.

Ironically, the Congressmen were agitating against alleged Marxist efforts to prevent the Ramakrishna Mission from running their schools in the state. But their method of preserving the sanctity of educational institutions made even senior leaders of the party uncomfortable. Even Subrata Mukherjee, at other times not found wanting in unseemly displays of emotion, told reporters in the Assembly lobbies: "I do not agree with what my colleagues are doing." Abdus Sattar, leader of the Congress(I) Legislature Party, also kept a low profile throughout the unsavoury incident. It was clear that the squatting legislators led by Satyaranjan Bapuli, a particularly vociferous member, had staged the show on their own steam without bothering, in true Congress(I) style, to consult the leadership.

Anxious Colleagues: The incident caused serious anxieties in the Marxist camp



Basu: insulted

not merely as an indication of the future methods of the major opposition party inside the house, but because of its effect on the indisposed Basu. Even as he pushed his way to his room, the chief minister's face showed the strain he was labouring under. Said a close aide later: "After Promode Dasgupta's death, J.B. has a lot more responsibility on his shoulders and we were really taken aback when he suddenly fell ill. Now we are worried that the budget session of the Assembly will cause him more strain, particularly as the attacks are descending almost to the level of the physical." In fact just then Basu had been repeatedly requested by his colleagues to stay away from his chamber. But he had brushed these aside with the characteristic argument: "If I do that it will be a moral victory for the Congress(I) and I cannot allow that to happen."

Strangely enough, the next day there was no word of regret from the Congress(I) benches for their unseemly conduct. Instead their storm-trooper Suniti Chattoraj, a small town lawyer, continually tried to disturb the Assembly proceedings by demanding an apology from the chief minister for his "rude words". When he was named and suspended for the rest of the session by the speaker, members of both the Congress parties staged a walk-out protesting the 'strangling' (sic) of democracy. In a legislature that has witnessed many a furore in the past, last fortnight's incidents were perhaps a palatable taste of things to come. —SUMANTA SEN

KARNATAKA

End Of The Beginning

THERE seems to be a familiar ring to what is happening to the newly-formed Janata government in Karnataka. After the mudslinging last fortnight, the adamant S. Bangarappa finally convened the much-touted executive council meeting of the Kranti Ranga which revoked its earlier parliamentary board decision to merge with the Janata Party and decided to retain its separate identity.

Although Bangarappa reiterated his support to the Government, the move signified the first major split that threatened to disintegrate the 60-day-old Janata ministry in true 1979 fashion. While the pattern was predictable, what took the Janata Party by surprise was the increase in Kranti Ranga supporters from four to nine MLA's. Said Bangarappa, who was elected as Kranti Ranga president at the meeting, confidently: "More will join me in the coming months." It was clear that while he would not immediately withdraw his support to the fledgeling government in the next few months, he would probably take every opportunity to run it down and garner more legislator support. Right now, he still does not have enough MLA's with him to topple the Janata Government's brittle majority of 133 in the 224-strong lower house.

The precariously poised Janata ministry's fate now lies in the continued support of the 18 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA's. A perceptible softening in the BJP's attitude towards the Hegde ministry was evident after the party's recent defeat in the Delhi elections. Said the normally virulent A.K. Subbiah, BJP president: "Hegde may have bungled in some matters of administration but he is capable of rectifying his efforts." He added: "All those opposed to the Congress(I) should not destabilise the Janata Government." But this marriage of convenience is likely to last only as long as it suits the BJP.

Internal Dissension: Demoralising the Janata Party further, its candidate T.V. Shivashankarappa lost to his Congress(I) opponent H.R. Raju by 17,000 votes in the Tarikere by-election held on February 27. Shivashankarappa was a Kranti Ranga nominee who was retained by the Janata despite Bangarappa's recalcitrance. While the jubilant leader of the Congress(I) Legislature Party Veerappa Moily described the result as a "historic win", an embarrassed S.R. Bommai, the former Janata Party president, said: "The defeat is not so much of the
Janata Party as the defeat of Bang
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silence over Bangarappa's exit.

But the Tarikere by-election
into the open the internal tussle be
Janata Party and the former Kran
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few former Kranti Ranga leaders b
defeat on Bommai's inept handlin
campaign and told Hegde to keep
from all party work.

In addition, the state Janata
nomination of former Kranti Ra
sident Abdul Nazir Sab as its *ad hoc*
not been welcomed by all sections
party. In fact, Hegde's Cabinet is fa
its cohesion. Already Chandrapra
daughter of the late Devraj Urs, is
that in the recent Cabinet expans
Excise portfolio was taken away fr
and she was given the Social
Ministry instead. She has continued
tain her relations with Bangarappa
even invited to attend the Kranti
Executive Council meeting, though
fully chose to keep away.

Meanwhile, Hegde continues
difficulties in prodding his governm
action. After the recent Bellary
where five policemen were suspe
allegedly raping a 16-year-old g
TODAY, March 15, 1982), he has resh
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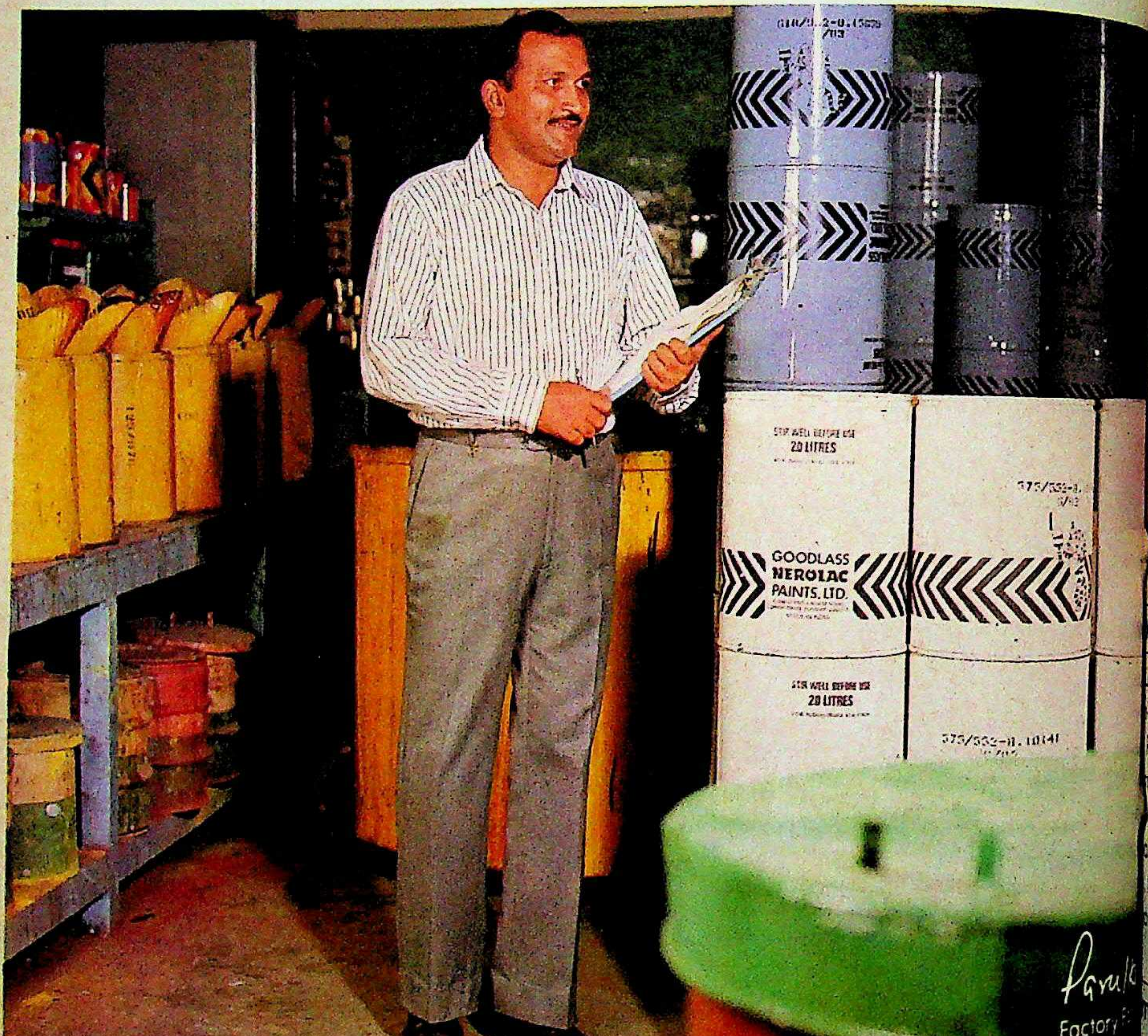
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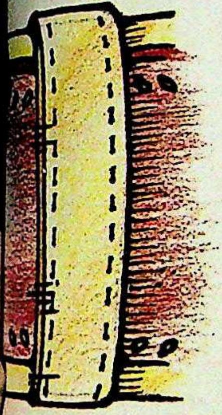

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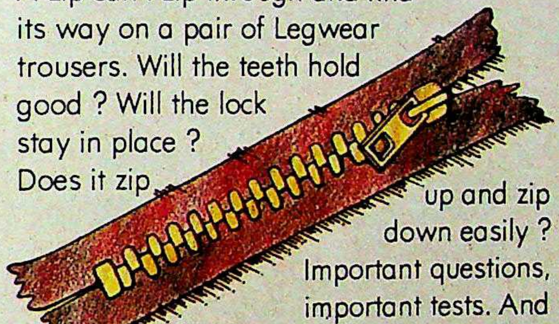

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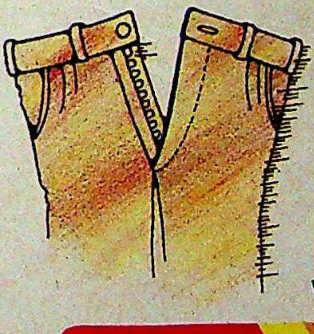

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LIAMENT

Fading Forum

OR PARLIAMENT watchers who ave been noting declining standards h anxiety, last fortnight must have lised their fears. For three days run- the Lok Sabha the quorum bell had ung at 11 a.m., at the start of question ecause less than 55 members or 10 per f the house's strength were present. ck of quorum, though usual in other caused a stir as it happened in the nor- well-attended question hour and the ing of the budget session. Remarked ndant: "If this is the state of affairs at rt of the budget session one wonders ill happen towards the end."

is fears are more than justified. teeism has become so rampant that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was d to take note of it. Last fortnight, find- rge groups of her partymen chatting e lobby while the house was in session Gandhi ordered them to attend imme- . However, physical presence is not h. Till the end of last year 100 of the embers had not even made their n speech.

"The youngsters have not been trained to do their homework. They have no se of involvement."

.G. KULKARNI (Congress-S)

Apathy goes even deeper. On March 2, e 20 questions up for oral reply 12 could e answered as the members who had put up had not bothered to show up. And the tone was Minister of State for entary Affairs Kalpanath Rai who en dozing twice last year. Luckily for is only considered unparliamentary to not to sleep.

Unusual Queries: One reason for this f interest in what was the liveliest hour h houses is the deteriorating quality of eries. On February 3 the level of ons became almost farcical when a Pratap Singh of the Congress(I) whether the Government was aware a Sri Lankan cricketer died because a bumper ball hit him on the chest. The MP wanted to know if the Government would try to get bumper balls banned at the international level and if not, why. The Government's reply was that because of lack of details it was not certain whether the death had been caused by a bumper ball. The answer went on to say with perfect seriousness that these balls cannot be banned as a rule but persistent bowling of bumpers can be interpreted as intimidatory and that can be prohibited.

Ignorance also plays its part. A few sessions back an MP wanted to know which sections of Bihar border the sea. Questions have also been put up about whether India plans to send an Indian to the moon and why a census has not been conducted about the number of hijras in the country. The reason for questions of this sort is probably because the MP's anxiety to fulfil their quota of questions. And of course a lot of time could be saved if MP's consulted the reference section instead of putting up questions.

Veteran parliamentarians feel that the reason for this is the kind of politician that is getting elected. Says A.G. Kulkarni, a senior Congress(S) leader who has been an MP for 15 years: "The youngsters have not been properly trained to do their homework. They have no sense of involvement, one never sees them in the library." Communist Party of India (CPI) MP Indrajit Gupta states: "It is doubtful whether these MP's possess any qualifications besides youth."

Average Age: Statistics of the members of the seventh Lok Sabha, however, show that even these excuses do not wash. The average age of the present lot of MP's is 49.9 years which is higher than any previous batch except the last one. Interestingly enough, it was the first Lok Sabha that had the lowest average age—46.5 years. It is also not true that they lack an educational background. Statistics shows that no previous house had such a large number holding academic degrees. The percentage of graduates is 40.06; that of post-graduates 26.8. Only 10.3 per cent have not passed high school as against 23.2 per cent in the first Lok Sabha.

The MP's have their own explanations for the decline in standards. And as usual the Treasury and Opposition benches lay the blame squarely on each other. Said Congress(I) MP Kamal Nath: "The Opposition makes noise for the sake of making noise. Their bad behaviour is on record. It is very charitable of the speaker to allow them as much leeway as he does." Shoots back the Lok Dal(C)'s R. Singh: "Who is the ruling party to talk of decorum? When Kalpanath Rai was in the Opposition I saw him waving his shoe at the speaker." The increasing rowdiness in Parliament is responsible for another distressing trend. These days not more than three or four of the 20 questions listed for the day get answered as each reply is greeted with innumerable supplementaries.

There is also the charge that it is the executive wing that is responsible for the devaluation of Parliament. Mrs Gandhi's record of attendance is the worst of all her predecessors and her antagonistic attitude to the Opposition and indifference to their criticism and suggestions have set the pace for her colleagues. Said Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP L.K. Advani: "When debates in Parliament established charges against Nehru's close friends like K.D. Malaviya and V.K. Krishna Menon he felt compelled to take action. In contrast, during the Antulay cement scandal and Kuo oil deal debates in Parliament the Government was not willing to move an inch. So great was Panditji's regard for Parliament that he never went abroad when Parliament was in session." Janata Party MP Subramaniam Swamy added: "An adversary relationship has developed between Parliament and the Government and Mrs Gandhi's contribution is 90 per cent. She comes rarely and does not try to conceal her contempt."

"An adversary relationship has developed between Parliament and the Government and Mrs Gandhi's contribution is 90 per cent."

—SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY (Janata Party)

Controversial Post: The office of the speaker too has come in for sharp criticism. In the past, though they did not resign from their parties, speakers stayed away from active politicking but now they are known to attend party rallies and meetings. Opposition MP's complain of a partisan attitude of the chair; said one: "The days of Mavalankar are long past. The correspondence between Mavalankar and Nehru shows how speakers in the past fought for Parliament's rights because they saw themselves as custodians of Parliament's supremacy. Nowadays the attitude is that the speaker is just below a minister in the hierarchy."

Shyam Lal Yadav, deputy chairman of

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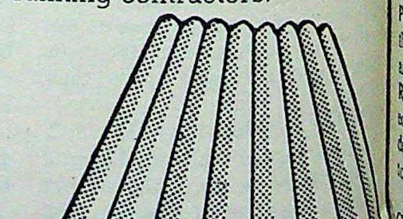

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Rajya Sabha replies: "The speaker's task is a delicate one and in the process the chair is dragged into controversies and even accusations are levelled against it. The more the chair is indulgent the more the members get out of hand." Balram Jakhar, speaker of the Lok Sabha, feels that the Opposition expects more than it gives. He advocates a system like Great Britain's where the speaker resigns from his party but in the next election is not opposed by any party. Said he: "If a speaker resigns from his party what happens to him after he steps down from the post? Does he take sanyas?"

Rulings: Even the press is becoming more free in what it says about the chair. This was never more evident than during the debates on Antulay's cement deals and trusts and the Kuo oil scandal. Even the normally establishment *Hindu* felt that the rulings of the presiding officers "pointed unmistakably to no more than pulling the ruling party out of a difficult situation". *The Sunday Observer* wrote: "The speaker and the chairman failed Parliament in our most crucial hour."

Most forthright of all was the *Indian Express's* former executive editor, Arun Shourie: "Are we idiots to accept that deliberate lies are being fed to Parliament?" before advising me to be more careful with my facts Mr Hidayatullah, you should be more careful of your law." In spite of these remarks the Public Undertakings Committees dropped charges against him. Commented recently the Congress(S)'s Kulkarni: "Politics has become more important than privilege. If privilege goes through then the Government would be exposed. It would have meant that Shourie would have the right to call for any document."

With Parliament getting more and more disorderly in the last few years an interesting phenomenon has developed. Increasingly in order to silence a member who does not obey directions to be seated, the chair has resorted to the tactic of ordering the official parliament reporters not to record whatever the member is saying. This means that the press is also not entitled to report what is happening as it is not on record. Yadav feels this measure does not amount to censorship. "Whatever the members say with the permission of the chair and in accordance with well established parliamentary rules of debate and behaviour is recorded, but one of the basic duties of the chair is to regulate and conduct the proceedings of the house in an orderly fashion."

Of late, however, one finds that the official parliamentary reporters, even without being asked to do so by the chair, quietly omit recording some of the heated and abusive exchanges between members. Such exchanges one finds listed in the official transcripts simply as "interruption". Admits Yadav: "If there are unusual interruptions which are not possible to be taken down by our parliamentary reporters they record the noise as "interruptions" in the proceedings."

The Treasury and Opposition benches differ even about the role and usefulness of Parliament. Kamal Nath says: "Parliament is a formality of our democratic system. It is a fashion and fashion can be endless. What comes out of it is nothing." Janata Party's Swamy has his own interpretation: "Today the MP is judged not by his performance on the floor of the house but by the work he has got done in his own constituency." Lok Dal(C)'s Singh sticks to a more traditional view: "Parliament remains an important forum where the people's aspirations and views can be represented. Even if the Government pays little heed, at least the public gets to know what is happening." A standing joke among pressmen perhaps sums it up best: some parliamentary correspondents make an appearance merely to collect their daily quota of 5 kg of raddi for sale in the form of impressively heavy question bundles.

—COOMI KAPOOR

RESEARCH

Speech Therapy

AFTER years of using Western medical techniques, members of the medical profession in India have been devoting more and more time on research aimed at devising techniques that are more applicable to Indian conditions. Last month, one such doctor, Prithika Chary, a neurologist, was among the 10 women scientists to receive the annual Indian Council of Medical Research Kshanika award. Chary received the award for her doctoral research in devising a new speech testing procedure to identify cerebral damage.

The testing equipment devised by Chary consists of a fairly simple kit of some graphs, tables and objects of common use with which Indian patients can easily associate. In addition, it will take less time than the methods used until now, which took up to two and a half hours. Said Chary: "My test will take at the most one and a half hours and it can locate, with 80 per cent accuracy, the cerebral damage in a case of speech impairment. What is more, it can be used by paramedical personnel, so that a doctor does not have to spend his time sitting with the patient throughout the 90 minutes. I have even a brief version of the test lasting only half an hour, which helps in arriving at some preliminary findings."

Foreign Methods: Till now, the most widely practised methods of examining cerebral speech damage are the Minnesota Test for Differential Diagnosis of Aphasia (cerebral loss of speech), developed by Hildred Schuell in 1970 and the Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination, devised by Goodglass and Kaplan a few years later. The problem with these speech testing methods is that they are long-winded and involved and sometimes need more than one sitting.

Apart from the fact that they are time-consuming, what renders them difficult to use in the Indian context is their assumption of literacy in patients. The tests use line diagrams, for example, to draw out the patient to try to speak and identify them. But this may not succeed with the Indian mind, simply because the patient may not be educated and literate enough to respond to a line diagram. Chary has adapted the tests to suit Indian requirements by replacing the line diagrams and objects difficult to identify with diagrams of common items of daily use that can be easily identified even by an illiterate person.

Chary: beating illiteracy

Interesting Findings: Perhaps the more important aspect of her research is the interesting sidelights it has thrown up, each of which is a promising area of potential research. Some of these are peculiarly relevant to Indian conditions. If illiteracy is one aspect of the Indian situation, multilingualism is another.

Delving deeper into the speech problems of multilinguals, the doctor detected a direct and proportionate correlation between literacy and multilingualism. Tabulating the case histories of over 500 people—one of the largest canvasses ever taken into account in any speech testing research project so far—Chary has calculated that as many as 86 per cent of the literates were multilinguals; whereas this was true for only 30 per cent of the illiterates. Findings such as these should whet researchers' appetites for more figures of speech.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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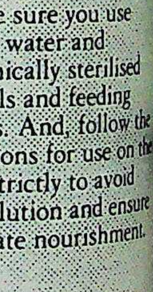

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PUNJAB

The Centre Hits Back

THE TABLES were turned on the Akali leadership for the first time in their 30-month-old agitation which has taken over 100 lives when both Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, chose to bypass back-breaking parleys and talk directly to the Sikh community. In an unprecedented political offensive, even President Giani Zail Singh dubbed the Akali agitation as anti-Sikh and asked the leadership to withdraw their earlier resignations from the Assembly in the "wider interest of Punjab and the country". The Akalis had called on the President to secure his resignation following their failure to obtain 'justice' from the Government.

If the march to Rashtrapati Bhavan was ntended to derive favourable publicity, the Akalis had never fared worse. Quoting exensively from the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikhs' sacred book), Zail Singh was critical of their inability to take a strong public stand against the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane, the planting of meat in temples and he secessionist slogans raised by protagonists of Khalistan. Chastising them shaply, he reportedly said that Punjab had uffered whenever the Akalis had launched heir agitation. By the time the delegation merged from the presidential residence, racks were evident within the Akali ranks. n a significant development, three senior MLA's, Ravi Inder Singh, former Assembly peaker, Jiwan Singh Umranangal, and Harchand Singh Fattanwala did not respond to Punjab Assembly Speaker B.B. Mishra's all to confirm their resignation letters.

In addition, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee(I) Chief Hans Raj Sharma and Chief Minister Darbara Singh were asked to close their ranks and commence an extensive ublic relations campaign in the countryside. aid a senior All India Congress Committee(I) official: "We have tolerated it for ong. The Congress(I) represents the maority of the Sikh community. The Sikhs, by oting for Mrs Gandhi in Delhi, have exressed unambiguous faith in her adership."

Partial Acceptance: In a move calcuted to counter the agitation which has ocked the nation's most prosperous state or the last three years, Mrs Gandhi kept the ecision on the political and economic deands in the 45-point Akali charter of ctober 1981 in abeyance while unilaterally cepting their religious demands. These ere a ban on the sale of tobacco, meat and alcohol near the Golden Temple and the Durgiana Temple in the holy city of Amritsar; permission to carry nine-inch long kirpans on board Indian Airlines flights; arrangements for relaying Gurbani broadcasts from the Golden Temple; and the commitment to enact an all-India gurudwara act in consultation with other state governments.

Reciprocating the Sikhs' vote of confidence during the Delhi elections, Mrs Gandhi also announced the Delhi Administration's decision to release a portion of the Delhi Kotwali in Chandni Chowk for Gurudwara Sisganj, to raise a suitable memorial for Guru Teg Bahadur. She, however, pointedly refrained from making any commitment on the Akali demands regarding immediate transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, the sharing of the Ravi-Beas surplus waters or the Anandpur Saheb political resolution demanding more financial and political autonomy for the state.

Since Mrs Gandhi's announcement, made at a Sikh gathering organised by the rival Akali Dal (Tara Singh) in Delhi, the Congress(I) has organised public meetings and processions hailing her decision to accept the Sikhs' religious demands. Similar adulatory speeches were made at the meeting of the Delhi unit of the World Sikh Council last fortnight, to which Rajiv Gandhi invited. In addition, Darbara Singh bro over 10,000 Sikhs, representing "each te of Punjab, on a 'thanksgiving' grimage to 1 Safdarjung Road. Said "The Akalis now have no ground for tinuing their *dharmayudh* because thei ligious demands have been accepted."

Basic Demands: Reacting sharply, wever, the Akalis have termed the noeuvre a "fraud aimed at dividing Sikhs". Said the Akali Dal morcha dicta Harchand Singh Longowal soon after t Delhi announcement: "The Governm has made our basic demands a prestige i and is trying to mislead the people Longowal maintained that the morcha la ched on August 4, 1982, was aimed securing the complete fulfilment of e basic demands for which 114 people ha sacrificed their lives and 96,000 volun had courted arrest.

T.S. ASHOK

Zail Singh with Akali leaders at Rashtrapati Bhavan: turning the tables

These eight demands were: the ena ment of an all-India Gurudwara act, t withdrawal of criminal cases against Aka activists and their release from jail, tra of Chandigarh and other Punjabi-speak areas in the adjoining states to Punjab, annulment of all water distribution arra ments between neighbouring states handing over of the control of water h works to Punjab, a strong federal stru for the state based on the Anandpur S resolution, the declaration of Punjabi a second official language in Haryana Himachal Pradesh, and ownership rig farmers in the Terai region of Uttar desh. Reiterated a senior Akali leader: long as these demands remain, we will e our *dharmayudh.*"

Though the Akali leadership is finding it asingly difficult to sustain its agitation, s thinking of coverting peaceful morchas more direct ones. It has already directed youth wing to also pressurise non-Akali s to resign from their Assembly membership. However, internal dissensions are coming to the surface. Even Longowal, goes by the title of "morcha dictator", speaks of a war being made up of many es, implying that some battles may be in the larger interest. In fact, Longowal's ements and tactics have taken on an sistent tone, indicating the depletion of Akali arsenal in maintaining the tempo the agitation. Said he non-committally:

Mrs Gandhi addressing Sikhs in New Delhi: tactical gains

We shall take up non-cooperation plans ever we need to."

Sharp Disagreement: The leadership of Akalis has been embroiled in sharp ate for the last few weeks with the dliners and moderates conducting wordy h. Some, like Prakash Singh Badal and jit Singh Barnala are for a long drawn out eaceful struggle while others like Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Jagdev Singh Talwandi d Bhindranwale are for greater mili-cy. But the moderates are taking the tremists to task for not exploiting Mrs Gandhi's gesture to suspend the agitation by struing it as their victory. A suggestion as also made to use Zail Singh's appeal to "call off" the agitation. It was, however, turned down by the hawks. They, in turn, have suggested that the Sikh issue be taken to the Human Rights' Commission, applying for an associate membership of the United Nations and a massive march to New Delhi—suggestions which form the basis for launching another phase of the Akali agitation.

However, it is clear that the Akalis will find themselves politically isolated if they adopt agitational techniques. All opposition parties and three Congress(I) chief ministers of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan have already adopted stiff postures against their demands. Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal was, in fact, mauled by the BJP, Lok Dal and Janata Party for his suggestion that the city of Chandigarh be divided on a 50:50 basis between the states of Haryana and Punjab.

Even in Parliament, all opposition parties have praised the Government's handling of the Punjab situation and pleaded for a continuation of the problem-solving tripartite talks with the agitators. Reciprocating their sentiments, Home Minister P.C. Sethi declared: "From our side, we shall always be conciliatory. We believe in resolving problems through negotiations."

But with the Akalis now in a cleft stick, while both their fate and that of Punjab hang in balance, the war of attrition is likely to worsen.

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Banking On God

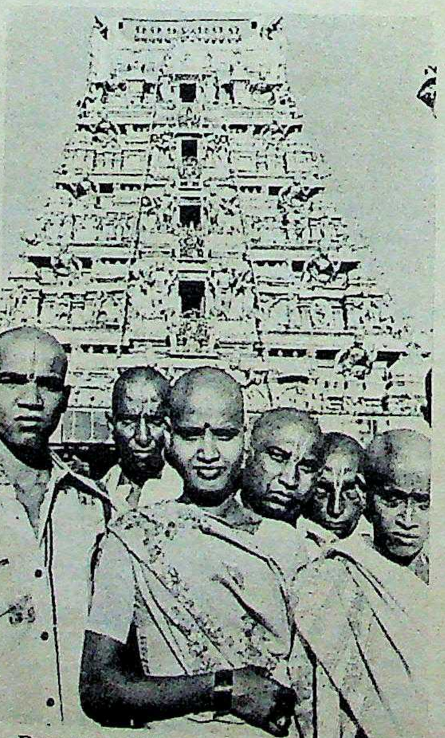
CAN OFFERINGS to God made at places of worship be available on tap for government? This is the question raised following the controversial fiat of the Andhra Pradesh Government to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to transfer all surplus funds held in commercial banks to the Government treasury. An anxious Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao took the decision, ignoring both his Endowments Minister E. Anjaneyulu and the board of trustees of the TTD, in his eagerness to mop up resources even as the state's Finance Department was busy scraping the bottom of barrel in search for the last rupee. Worried by the state Government's overdraft, that totalled Rs 65 crore in the first week of March, Rama Rao offered to pay the TTD the same rate of interest as commercial banks for every paisa kept in the state account.

At first, the TTD management vehemently disagreed. In a resolution after a two-hour session, the management committee pointed out that "offerings in the *hundi* by millions of pilgrims from all over the country and abroad were made in the abundant faith that accumulations would be put to use for the maximum benefits of the temple, pilgrims and for the propagation of the religion." The four-man management committee decided to refer the issue to the board of trustees, emphasising that "the move would not only invite public criticism, but also amount to a breach of trust on the part of the management if it yielded to the directive". The management also got the High Court to stay the Government's orders.

Unfavourable Reactions: A howl of protest followed. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator M. Venkaiah Naidu said: "It is an encroachment on the affairs of a Hindu religious endowment. The Government should have found out the views of the temple trustees and the devotees before taking a decision." Commented the Janata Party legislator S. Jaipal Reddy: "Government should not tamper with the funds of religious organisations. It is more difficult and sensitive to touch funds of organisations of religions other than Hinduism. The consequences are bad, for a Hindu backlash can be worse than minority communalism."

Not to be outdone by the chief minister, Anjaneyulu staged a perfect sideshow. He announced that the Government was thinking of auctioning 340,000 acres of temple land in the state and depositing the money in banks. But when the cultivating tenants threatened to launch an agitation, Anjaneyulu said he was reconsidering the plan. To make matters worse for Rama Rao, he told a press conference that he was not aware of the controversial directive even after the management committee opposed the Government's order-cum-offer.

Embarrassed by these developments, Rama Rao explained in a lengthy statement to the press: "God does not take exception to his treasure being utilised to provide drinking water to the thirsty or to give a few loaves to his starving children. Humanity is divinity, divinity is humanity." This was hardly convincing, for it is well known that the TTD already contributes to various causes including the development of the Sri Venkateshwara University; the common good fund of the state used for better maintenance of temples; the publishing of religious books; maintaining welfare organisations; and to a network of TTD centres which help pilgrims throughout the country. Apart from this, the TTD spends about Rs 6 crore on its establishment in a year. The unrelenting chief minister immediately ordered that the three vacancies on the 13-member TTD board be filled with Telugu Desam legislators so that his plan would not be torpedoed.



Devotees at Tirupati: donating lavishly

Religious Objections: By then, th
ves caught the attention of religious le
Opposing it, Sri Jayendra Saras
shankaracharya of Kanchi Kam
Peetham, told a press conference in Ma
"It is improper on the part of a govern
which professed belief in Rama Raj
have issued such an order which amo
to utilising the temple funds for se
purposes. The temple funds represen
offerings made by devotees from all ove
country and are intended to be used
activities connected with the temple and
the propagation of godliness in the coun
Though this came two days before the
board meeting, Rama Rao stood his gro
"Anyway it is not swamiji who made
comment," he said.

Less than a fortnight earlier, the ch
minister had called on the senior shank
acharya, Sri Chandrashekhar Saraswat
Bhangur village near Gulbarga
Karnataka. The senior swamiji told Ra
Rao to ask the TTD to appoint a perso
every village to work with missionary
and gather the people every morning
evening in prayer for five minutes. He
that if the people chanted "Gov
Govinda" at these prayer meetings, it w
do a lot of good not only for them but
the state and the country.

Though there have not been any org
nised mass protests against the Governm
order, its right in demanding funds from
hundi, even on a temporary basis, cont
to be discussed in coffee shops and in
letters to the editor in regional newspap
Many tauntingly ask why the Governm
does not issue similar directives to fu
managed by mosques and churches.

One suggestion made to
Government was that the TTD place tw
hundis, one marked "offerings for relig
purposes" and the other marked "offe
for social welfare purposes" to end
controversy. Another suggestion was to
private funds by offering the same rat
banks for keeping it in the Governm
treasury. Some fear that the TTD will st
lose operational autonomy.

Meanwhile, after accepting
Government directive, the TTD transferr
33 crore to the state's account to make
financial position less gloomy. But this, it
feared, may be at the cost of a fall in the
collections at Tirupati. TTD income
doubled in the last five years and the p
estimate is Rs 33.65 crore. But gold o
have dropped, perhaps due to its incr
cost, while foreign coins have been pil
Said TTD employees: "As gold came i
motto used to be 'in gold we trust'. B
the latest move, it will be 'in NTR we
for the chief minister is trying to play
earth."

—AMARNATH K. M

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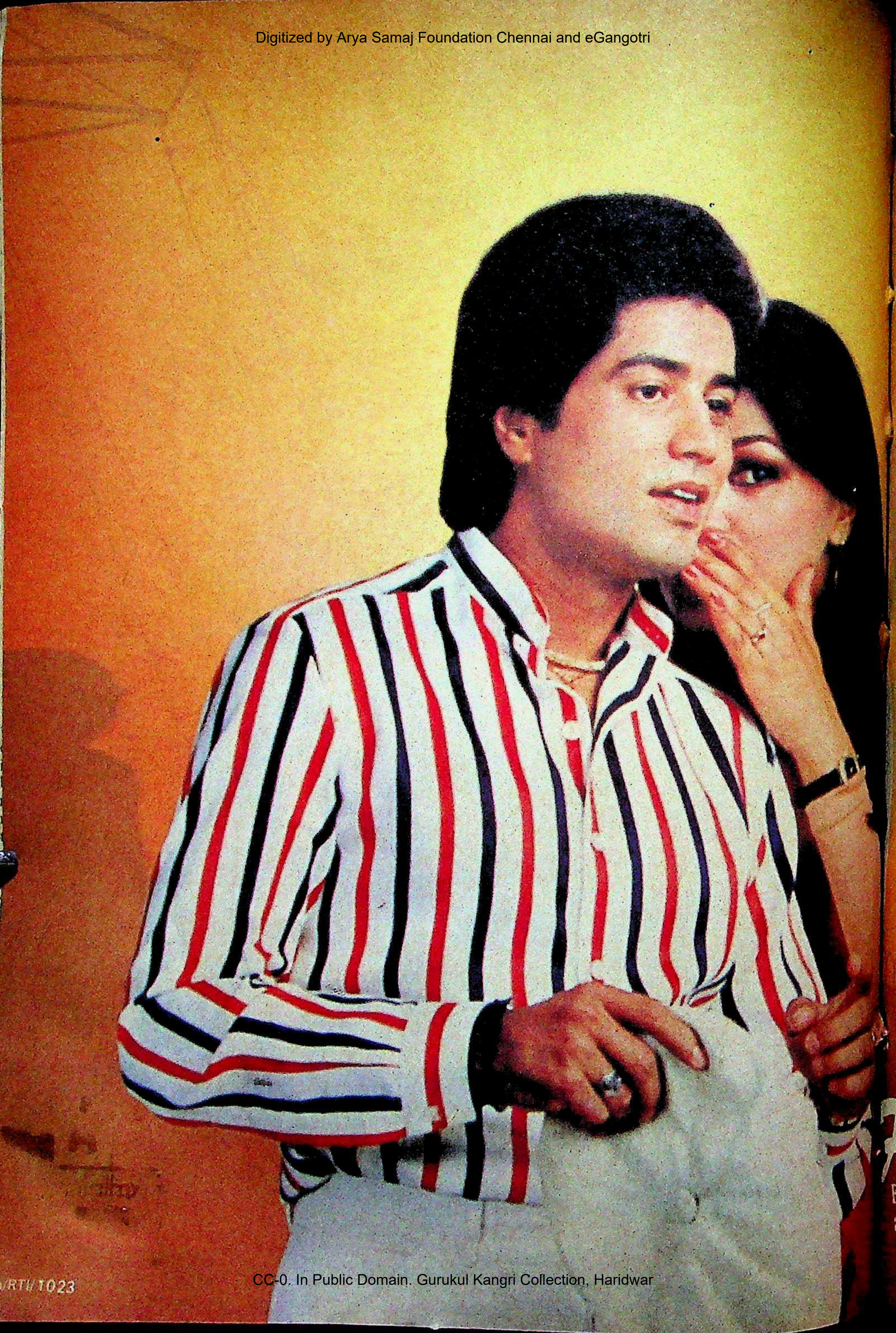
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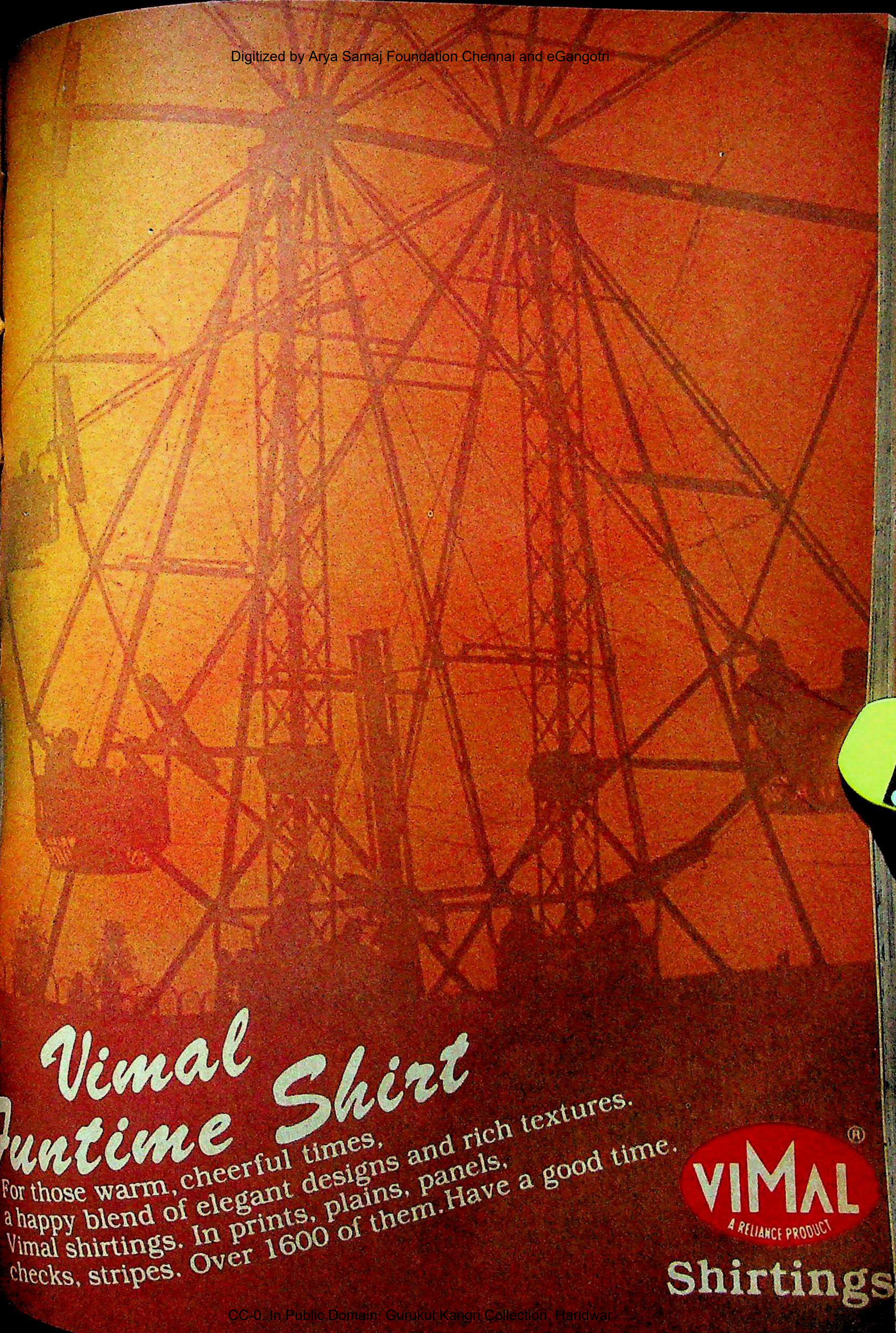

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KERALA

Coalition On The Rocks

KERALA'S ramshackle Congress(I)-led coalition government has always appeared to be on the verge of collapse. Last fortnight it came one step closer to the brink when it lost the presti- Nemom by-election to its arch-rival Communist Party of India-Marxist. Nemom has always been a Congress stronghold and in the state Assembly elections last year it was held by Chief Minister K. Karunakaran by a margin of 4,000. This time it broke with convention and voted in V.J. Thankappan of the CPI-M. Inevitably the defeat has been interpreted as a severe indictment of the ruling front. The Congress(I) had pulled out all the stops to win the elections. It poured an endless stream of money into the campaign and also had shamelessly pandered to communal sentiments by fielding a candidate from the community. In the end all manoeuvres proved fruitless. The feeling that the ministry is in its death throes has only increased the bickering amongst the disparate elements in the coalition. Each group knows Karunakaran is vulnerable to pressure. As a result everybody has abandoned moderation and is trying to grab as much as they can while the going is good. Says a senior Congress(I) leader: "It is every man for himself in the Kerala coalition."

Increasing Speculation: The Nemom defeat has also heightened speculation about the future course of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) which is part of the ruling front. Moves have been under way for some time now to promote a merger between the IUML and the All India Muslim League which is in opposition at the moment. If the two should come together it appears doubtful whether the IUML will continue in the ministry. Karunakaran has tried to allay fears that the IUML will quit by saying that the coalition would be strengthened by a merger. His statement, however, provoked IUML leader C.H. Mohammed Koya to retort: "The unity of the League is our own matter." Koya added that the unity moves were being pushed only to strengthen the Muslim community.

As it is the IUML with its strength of 14 MLAs has been trying to extract its pound of flesh every time it supports the ministry. The IUML has now put up demands for a separate Kasargod district. It has also demanded a commission to monitor the implementation of backward class reservations, old age pensions for mullahs, and another Muslim on the Public Service Commission and the High Court Bench. Above all it has pushed for full compensation to the victims of the Trivandrum and Alleppey riots.

Political observers in the state feel that the IUML is purposely making impossible demands. Karunakaran, however, has already agreed in principle to set up the new Kasargod district. Says M.V. Raghavan, a firebrand Marxist MLA: "At this rate this man Karunakaran will sell the entire state to safeguard his chief ministership."

Thankappan (left) and Koya

Opposition Moves: The CPI-M is watching Karunakaran's antics with considerable amusement and does not appear to be in any hurry to topple the ministry. The Marxists are said to have offered to support Mohammed Koya for the chief ministership. Industry Minister E. Ahmed of the IUML is also reported to have met West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu recently. And though the Marxist mouthpiece *Deshabhimani* attacked Ahmed recently for certain irregularities in the import and distribution of cement by the Small Scale Industries Development Corporation, the Marxists refrained from playing up the issue. Admits A.C. Shanmughadas of the Congress(S): "We spared Ahmed on political considerations."

The other parties in the ruling coalition are naturally none too happy about the growing influence of the League. One senior Christian leader said recently that it was nothing but "the Islamisation of Kerala". P.C. Chacko, the president of the Congress(S), in a similar vein accuses Karunakaran of being the man responsible for the rise of communal parties like the National Democratic Party (NDP) which represents the Nair community and the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) representing the backward Ezhava community.

The Muslim League's merger moves are part of a new trend in Kerala politics. The smaller parties have now realised that if they want to wield any clout they will have to add to their numbers by some means or the other. First off the mark was the Congress (Antony) which rejoined the Congress(I) a few months ago. Now the Kerala Congress (Mani) and the NDP are trying to work together. Not to be outdone the Kerala Congress(Joseph) and the Janata(G) are also trying to arrive at a working agreement. The SRP which has two members in the state Assembly has decided to hitch it's star to the IUML. Says Excise Minister N. Sreenivasan of the SRP: "We the Ezhavas have one thing in common with the Muslims—the implementation of reservations for the weaker sections."

Costly Support: The Congress(I) is watching all these moves with trepidation. It is getting support from the Kerala Congress(Joseph) to counter the influence of the IUML. But every bit of support comes at a price. The Joseph group is also pushing its own demands for a Christian majority district with its headquarters at Moovattupuzha.

If all this was not enough Karunakaran also has to face dissidents in his own party. Eight MLA's led by Jose Kuttiyani, a former aide of Congress(I) General Secretary C.M. Stephen, are spearheading a move against Karunakaran. Kuttiyani is particularly incensed because a bomb was thrown at his house recently. Asks Kuttiyani: "This was a government that was elected on a law and order plank but today Home Minister Vayalar Ravi is yet to apprehend the people behind a bomb attack on a ruling party MLA's house."

Two other contenders for the chief minister's post include Vayalar Ravi and powerful Congress(I) leader Oommen Chandy, who has better claims on the job with the tacit support of highly placed people.

Karunakaran, who now appears to have his back to the wall has said that his government will complete its full term. He, however, adds the rider that he is prepared to step down the moment he ceases to be of use to the state and the party. That time may not now be far off.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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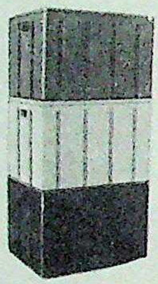
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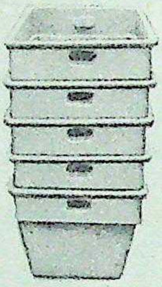
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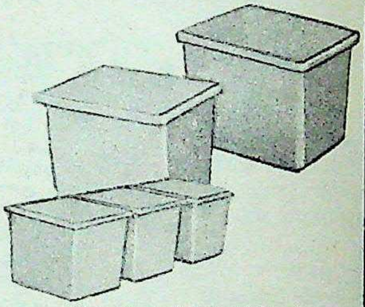
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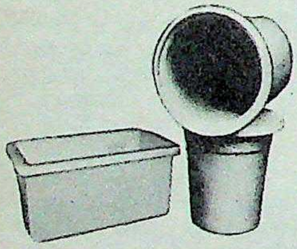
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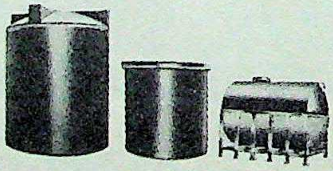
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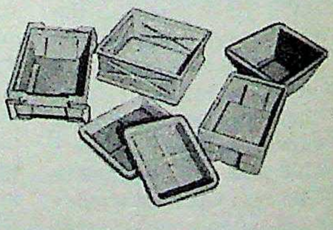
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DHYA PRADESH

Band On The Run

WITH almost 1,000 armed policemen wearily tramping mountains and thick forest in an unprecedented ...t for dacoit Ramesh Sikarwar and ...member gang last fortnight, the entire ...attention was focussed on its Shivpuri ...rena districts. Sikarwar had caused a ...on on February 26, when his gang ...d a bus and kidnapped 15 passengers. ...the drama is far from over, by March ...police had managed to rescue seven ...es, one had been killed and the remai... ...en, including a nine-year-old boy, ...ll at Sikarwar's mercy.

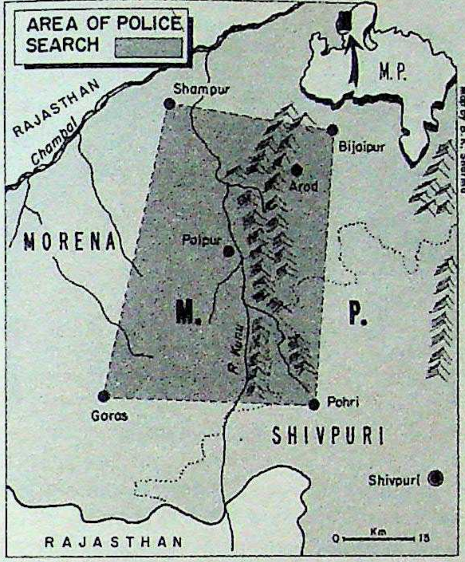
...avelling from Shepur in district ...a to the district headquarters of Shivpuri, the bus had started on its fateful journey ...the afternoon. At around 4 o' clock, it ...d Karhal, a police station in Morena ...out 75 km from Shivpuri. Barely kilo...s from Karhal, one of the passengers ...p and pulled out a country-made pistol ...ced the driver to halt. As the bus came ...ndstill, a man standing on the roadsi... ...h a twelve-bore gun got in and directed ...ver to turn the vehicle into a rough ...e road. A short distance away, the bus ...pped. After looting the passengers of ...mated Rs 2 lakh, the dacoits deflated ...es, put the engine out of order and ...d the hostages into accompanying

...rsh Treatment: Said Ramakant ...a, 29, registered medical practitioner ...lage Sumanali in Morena district who ...ong the hostages who got away: ...first two days we simply walked, stop... ...ly once for a brief meal. At first, each ...ands were tied behind his back; and ...re prodded with sticks and guns."

The kidnapping put the police in a tight ...It had to look for Sikarwar in his home...d—a roughly 4,000 sq km area that lies primarily in Morena and only partly in Shivpuri. Said an official: "A thousand policemen appear an inadequate number once you are out there. There are mountains and forests and gorges where you can pass within feet of a man and not spot him."

The police have thrown everything they have into the combing effort. The total force deployed is directed by 25 officers headed by Inspector-General of Police (Anti-Dacoity) J.A. Qureshi who has been camping at Pohra, a small tehsil town some 35 km west of Shivpuri, right from the start. A majority of the contingent is from the state's Special Armed Force (SAF), about two-thirds of them carrying .303 rifles and the rest tommy-guns, sten guns and hand-grenades.

This is not the first time that Sikarwar has proved to be a headache. He carries a reward of Rs 25,000, and his gang is the only major one left in the Chambal region. Described as being of a medium build, with long hair and *tika* on his forehead, the 30-year-old dacoit has operated in Shivpuri, Morena and to a limited extent in Rajasthan's Kota district. A Thakur, his family is poor, and he dropped out from school after class seven. Very little is known about him except that he once worked on daily wages with the Forest Department.



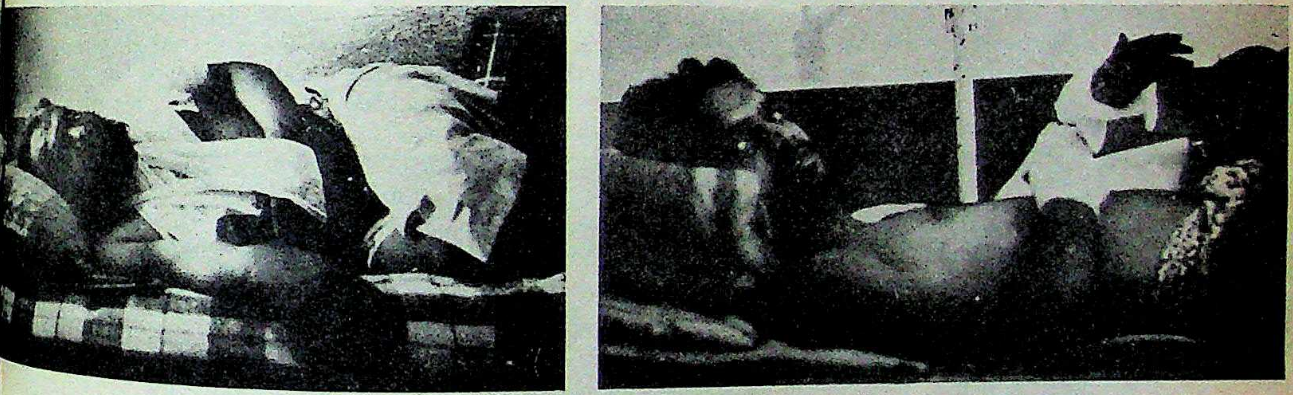
Sikarwar began his life of crime in 1979 and was arrested for robbing idols from a local temple in Shivpuri district. He jumped bail and has been missing ever since. In 1980 he committed his first kidnapping, in Shivpuri, and since then his gang has never looked back. Today, there are 75 crimes attributed to the gang. These include 15 murders, 11 attempted murders, seven dacoities and 42 kidnappings.

Killing Spree: Last year the gang went on a killing spree. Sikarwar, a casteist, killed four Harijans and wounded a fifth for daring to pray in a temple in Dhona village in Shivpuri district. He also killed 13 cowherds suspected of being police informers.

After the hostages were herded away, Sikarwar made it a point to never talk with them. Says Dwarka Prasad Aggarwal, an employee in a shop in Gwalior, who was among the captured: "I found that if I stuck right behind Sikarwar, his men never beat me. I learnt this after getting several beatings. We were asked to always speak in whispers and as far as possible to sit or lie down. We had to ask for permission if we wanted to move even a foot." Aggarwal continues to be haunted by the nightmarish experience. Another hostage, Vinod Kumar Sahani, a 19-year-old medical representative from Gwalior, is still in a daze.

Every man tried to deal with the situation as best he could. Says Gopal Das, a bulky middle-aged businessman from Shivpuri: "I never complained or cried. I only prayed. This is probably why Sikarwar was almost respectful with me because he himself is a deeply religious man. He prays to the goddess Durga at least four hours a day."

The police search meanwhile was severely hampered because the area had no roads.


Das (left) and Sharma in Shivpuri Hospital: harrowing experience

Nevertheless, about 80 men suspected of harbouring or informing Sikarwar were arrested under the state's anti-dacoity ordinance. Police officers also admit that Sikarwar's local contacts are excellent. According to the hostages, the gang of 10 employed over half a dozen Saheriya tribals to carry their possessions. The tribals were at ease, addressing Sikarwar as "Bhaiyya" or "Mukhiya".

Close Encounter: After walking for two days, the next three days were spent in a deep gorge where, "we could not see the sun until after 10 in the morning". On March 3, however, there was a slight alarm and the gang moved about a dozen kilometres through the night. On March 4 and 5, they moved only a short way. On March 6, for the first time since their kidnapping, the victims were allowed to wash up in a water hole. They had not even finished, when there was an alarm and they were asked to run along with the child hostage, Tinkoo, whom Sikarwar is said to have become very fond of. One police picket was misdirected by a tribal but another came straight on the track. And even as the captors and their prisoners scrambled up the hill, the police opened fire.

In flight, the dacoits urged their hostages to hurry but a group of them started lagging behind and when the police firing became heavy, they hugged the ground. However, two dacoits had stayed back too. When one of the hostages called out to the police, the dacoit fired. One of the hostages, Brijmohan Rawat, was fatally wonded, Gopal Das was hit on the upper part of his chest, and Ramakant Sharma got a bullet in his left shoulder causing a compound fracture, in addition to some pellet injuries. They are now in the Shivpuri district hospital.

Aggarwal: traumatised

Sikarwar this time seems to have bitten off more than he can chew. His gang carries two .303s, five twelve-bores and five muzzle loaders. But he holds his hostages

The rescue of some of the host at a time when the state Governm under attack in the state Assembly has now been imposed on the press so jeopardise the lives of the hostages.

Particularly under attack was Singh's lenient attitude towards Talks had been going on for a long t Morena Police Superintendent Saxena for Sikarwar's surrender. Me there were also serious allegations of tion against members of the Morena Finally, last month raids were co against Sikarwar's gang in Morena. camped in almost one area of the dist more than six months. While he cont commit crimes, no offences were reg On March 3, even as the police strive breakthrough, Saxena was shifted Morena to Bhopal and four other tendents of police were transferred.

But this time Sikarwar may have his luck too far. His capture has be point of prestige with the state Gover He has defied the administration far zenly. Irrespective of what happens case, it is certain that Sikarwar's days any case months—are numbered.

—SREEKANT KHA

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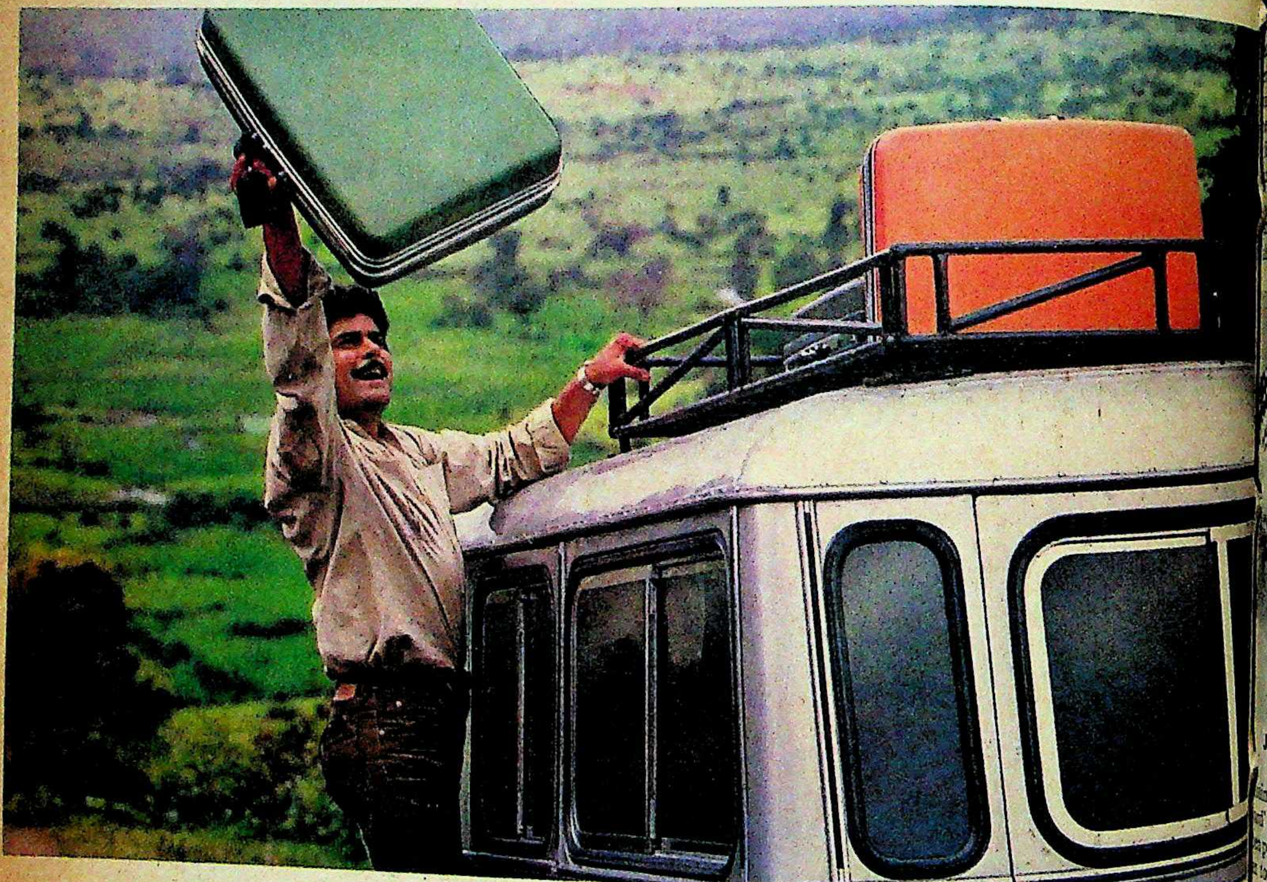

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GGLING

he Silver Lining

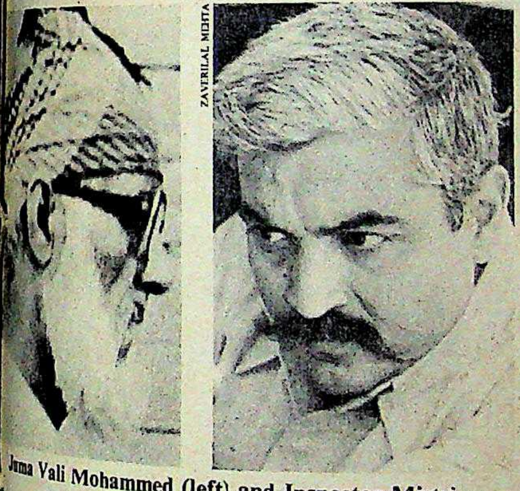
LAST month when police officers in Bhuj pulled off the largest ever seizure of contraband—Rs 3.5 crore worth of er—they were unaware that it was more st a routine Dubai smuggling operation. A fortnight later investigations into the re led the police to arrest Juma Vali hammed, 75, under the National rity Act after he was found to be shel- g Umar Dagara, a Pakistani national ted for spying. Dagara escaped before police could lay their hands on him and it red that he must have fled across Kutch Pakistan.

In mid-1981 Dagara enticed Mahesh- d and Rama, two employees of INS ra, an Indian Navy training ship into ing secret information for a monthly 're- d' of Rs 2,500. Dagara, the police say, persuaded them to make a trip to Pakis- to meet army officers there. But while ing the border Rama lost his nerve and d back to Bhuj. Maheshwari was interro- ed closely by the Pakistanis and warned to pass on wrong information. The kistanis allegedly showed Maheshwari a ailed film about the INS Valsura to prove they could not be easily fooled. Both a and Maheshwari were later arrested pying.

Close Watch: It is a telling comment on an intelligence that they did not know Dagara was staying with Juma Vali. The ce have been keeping careful tabs on ggling in Kutch ever since last Septem- when H.J. Mistri, an officer known for integrity, was posted to the region. ri's task was an uphill and at times a tively dangerous one. Once he was con- ted by six armed smugglers and escaped by the skin of his teeth. He reaped the reward for his perseverance finally on February 13 when during a patrol he spotted a truck heading for Chhachi village on the Kutch coast.

A hot chase followed and the occupants of the truck gave up when they found themselves outnumbered. But even Mistri could have little idea when he took charge of the truck that he would be pulling off the biggest ever haul in the country. As much as 10,565 kg of silver valued at Rs 3.5 crore was seized. Two guns, a revolver, and Rs 50,000 in cash was also seized.

Among those arrested are Juma's personal bodyguard and driver Juma Hotelwalla and Noor Mohammed Mithoo. The other three men arrested are also said to be close associates of Juma Vali and in separate statements they have said that the silver belonged to him. Juma Vali, however, is adamantly sticking to his story that he knows nothing about the silver.


ZAVERILAL MEHTA

Juma Vali Mohammed (left) and Inspector Mistri

Big Hauls: The police are also doing their level best to prove that Juma Vali has been behind earlier silver hauls. Last year Kadar Bhatti, another Pakistani national arrested in Ahmedabad carrying silver and gold worth Rs 1.4 crore said during interrogation that he used to operate for Juma Vali. However, he retracted his story when Juma Vali was brought before him. More recently early last month a car with false registration plates driven by Mahesh Kantilal Soni, a city jeweller was caught carrying Rs 22 lakh worth of silver.

Juma Vali meanwhile is strongly protesting his innocence. Last year the customs organised an unsuccessful operation to dig out evidence against him. His mud houses in Paiya village were thoroughly searched and the surrounding area dug up but nothing was found. Said Juma Vali triumphantly after the raid: "Had I been a smuggler I would not have lived in such a small house. I have never been to Pakistan and have nothing to do with that country. The customs and police are after me due to political pressure as I am anti-Congress(I)." Whatever the truth of his claims it remains to be seen whether the police will be able to make their case stick this time.

—RAMESH MENON

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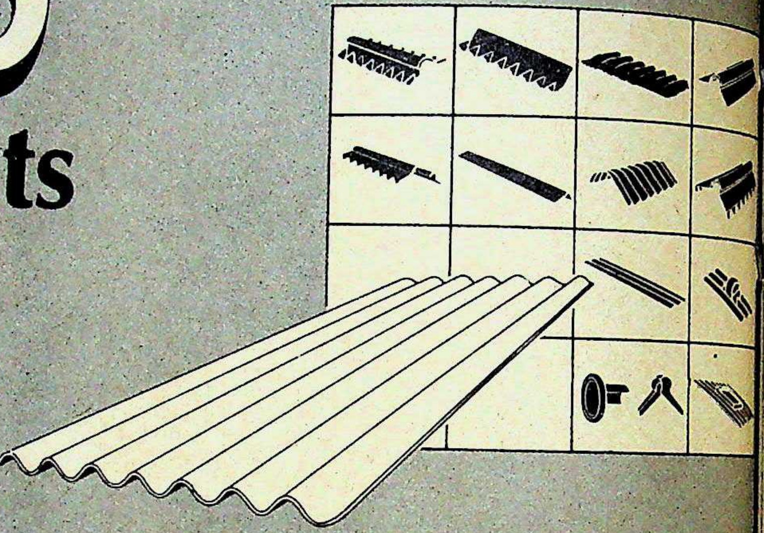

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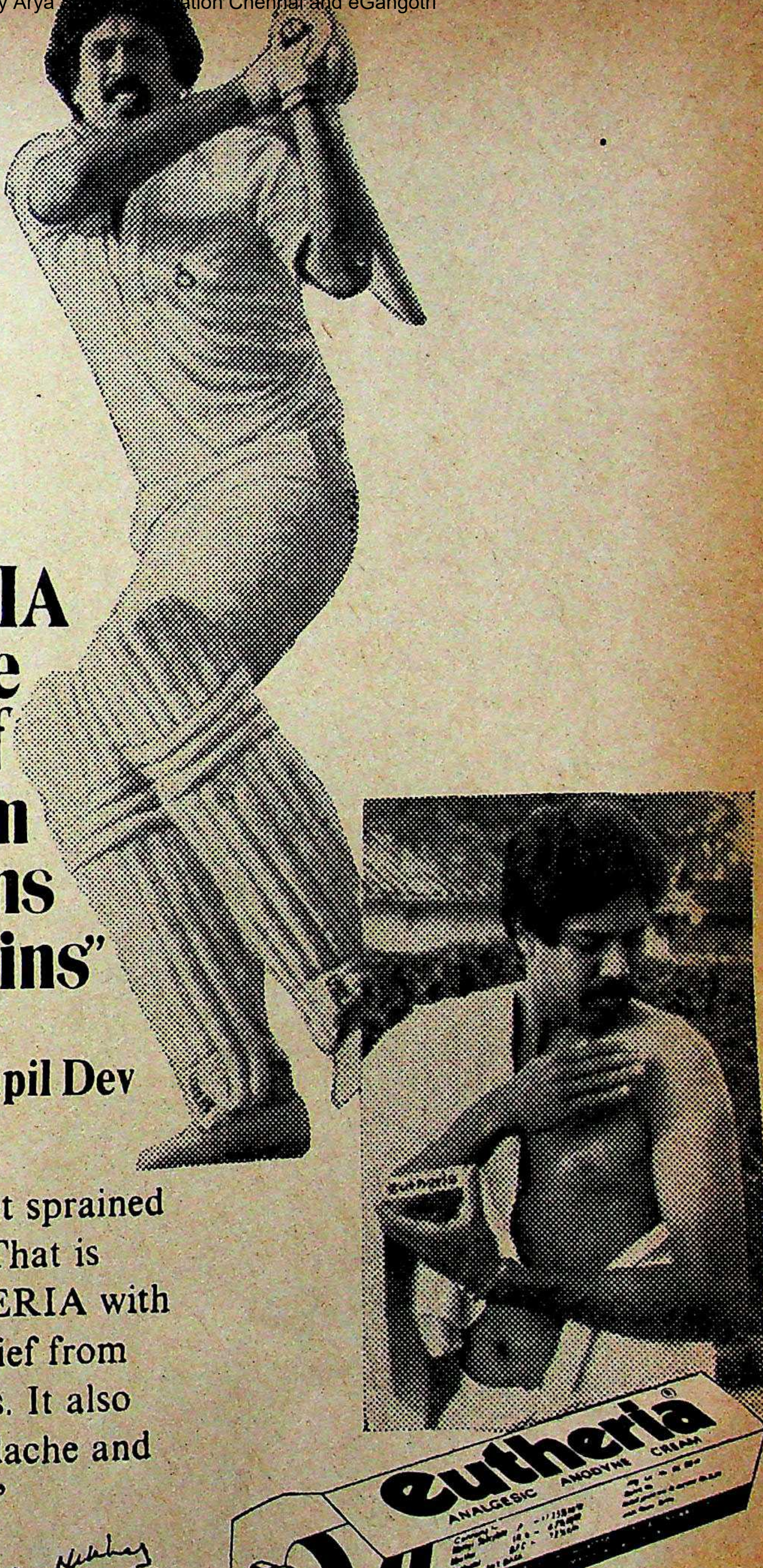

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TAMIL NADU

Provoked To Protest

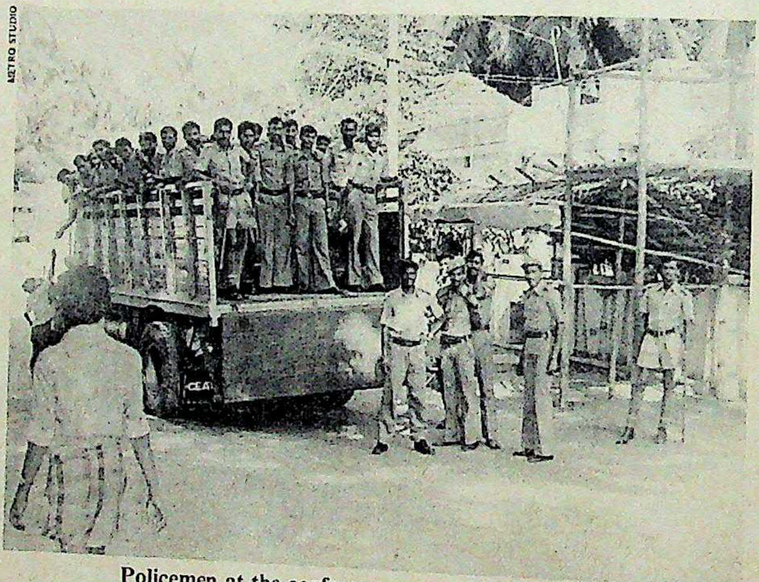
WITH more police than pilgrims in attendance last month, the customary devout throngs were markedly absent from the 10-day-long annual Hindu festival at the famous Bhagavati Amman Temple in the backward coastal village of Mandaikkadu, 20 km away from Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari district. While 13 companies of the Tamil Nadu Police, the Karnataka Police and the Central Reserve Police gravely patrolled the area, only paltry hundreds participated in the three-century-old rituals at the small and desolate village which has a population of 5,000 comprising Hindus and Christians in equal measure.

Symptomatic of a delicate communal situation, the poor turn-out was a measure of the Hindus' protest against the state Government's sudden decision to promulgate Section 144 in the entire Kanyakumari district two days before the Hindu Resurgence Conference scheduled for February 13 at Nagercoil. Convened by the newly-formed Hindu Unity Centre—a joint forum of the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu Munnani, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Arya Samaj and the Temple Protection Committee—the popularly received resurgence conferences were prompted by Harijan conversions to Islam notably at Koraiyur near Madurai in October 1980 and subsequently at Meenakshipuram in Tirunelveli district in February 1981.

While estimates of the numbers that defied the ban orders last month vary from the official 10,000 to the unofficial 50,000, it is clear that Hindus courted arrest in large numbers. With waiting police vans stuffed to capacity, many of those unaccommodated began to walk to nearby Kottar Police Station. Tension however erupted as the crowd neared St Xavier's Cathedral and in the ensuing police firing, a 19-year-old autorikshaw driver Kumar was killed. According to the Kanyakumari District Collector M.B. Pranesh, of the 369 people arrested at Nagercoil—apart from the first mobs which entered the jail and came out on bail soon after—some 160 were still behind bars, the rest also having been let out on bail.

Strong Reaction: The cause of the firing is under investigation by K. Kothandaraman, personal assistant (general) to the Kanyakumari district collector. Nevertheless the incident has sparked off spirited protests, with Hindu Front leaders observing relay fasts in different districts from February 25, and exhorting Hindus at meetings not to be cowed down by other religions and politicians alike.

The state Government's stand is quite unambiguous. According to Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), ever since the conference was announced, Pranesh had been trying to persuade the Hindu Front to hold it after the completion of the Mandaikkadu festival. MGR recalled the bad precedent set by last year's resurgence conference, also held at Nagercoil a fortnight before the festival. Said he: "Some unwarranted speeches were made at this conference, leading to the Mandaikkadu clashes." He added that "if the RSS thought that Hinduism could be protected only through provocative means, such protection was not necessary". During that festival, a number of Hindu women who had gone to bathe in the sea before coming to the Bhagavati Amman Temple had disappeared. Subsequently, the policemen who went to interrogate Christian fishermen in the area were reportedly attacked. They had then opened fire, killing six fishermen.



Policemen at the conference venue: poor turn-out

METRO STUDIO

MGR is probably on weak ground in apportioning the guilt when a judicial enquiry into last year's violence headed by P. Venugopal, a retired judge of the Madras High Court, is still under way. B Hindus and Christians each consti virtual half of the district's pop amidst increasing communal milita situation is certainly volatile.

Political Capital: Offering a c opinion, however, S. Vedantam, the president of the VHP, directly co "the eleventh hour ban on Hindu gence Conference in Nagercoil and t sequent vitriolic tirades launched aga RSS and the Hindu Front by MGR Cabinet colleagues, with the AIADMK toral strategy to net the sizeable C bloc votes in the Tiruchendur by-ele the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assemb

Vedantam alleges that MGR's e strategy was clear from the mome Christian Democratic Front (CDF) ca threatened to make inroads in AIADMK's Christian vote bank in T endur and jeopard Christian Nadar can R. Amrithraj. He feels was only by conced CDF's February 8 dem ban the conference MGR secured the wi wal of their candida successful consuma quid pro quo.

Strongly con these charges of p convenience and com prejudice, Law Minis Ponnaiyan said: "The rity of the Christians chendur are N whereas the Christian men of Kanyakuma trict, in particular Ma kadu, who are the o any at all—who shou possibly had a g against the Hindu Fro Fernando Christians." MGR als phasises that the Government had permission to the Mandaikkadu C community to hold a condolence during this year's festival for the fis killed in last year's clashes. They cons ly agreed to hold the meeting af festival.

Notwithstanding these expla the Vice-President of the Hindu Fr Vishwanathan said portentously: "Th fasts will continue till all our arrests are released unconditionally. Wh MGR may say about his party not str barter deal with the CDF, we are not rest till politics and religion are inex interlinked even among the Hindus interlinking which many would n prove of.

—S.H. VENKAT

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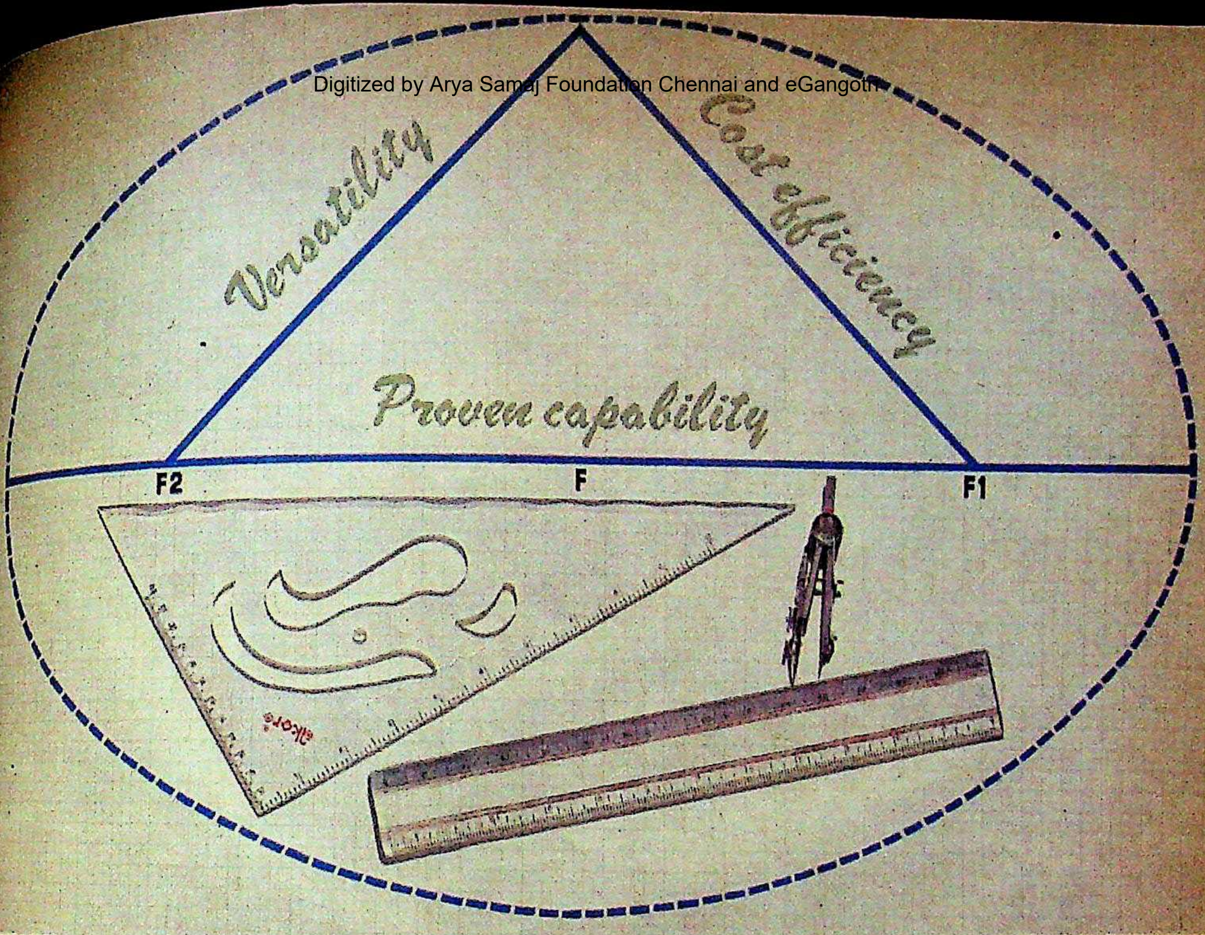

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AYODHYA

Unholy Politics

Deserted ghats in Ayodhya: halted activity

OLITICKING has taken the place of rayer in the holy city of Ayodhya, quiet township on the banks of the river, 130 km from Lucknow. Profes- al rivalry between two groups of pandas ss) giving way to violence has led the tion to such a turn that for the last al months all religious activity has come abrupt halt, in a city where thousands pilgrims from all over India throng peace, prayers and purification.

On February 25, a group of 200 angry dradias, a community of traditionally patetic pandas, staged a demonstration cknow in protest against a court order ch decreed the removal of their homes shelters in the ghats such as thatched is and *takats*. Sixty-nine were arrested reach of peace and lodged in the district a Banki Jail. The court also ordered all gious activities to be brought to a close, ering the pandas jobless.

The clash between established pandas as the Gangaputras who have been odhya for centuries and the Bhadradias e-old. The Gangaputras were the ori- habitants of Ayodhya and owners of amounts of land and property, which taken over by the Government as their ers decreased steadily. Now only one ment Gangaputra family remains—the ras, led by 70-year-old Ram Nath Misra. gh none of his family is directly ed in the religious activities in Ayo- Misra controls the whole religious ess through an army of agents and ers, and the ownership of ghats and properties.

Changed Role: The Bhadradias are derers from various religious centres like i, Prayag, Hardwar and Badrinath and gh originally engaged in escorting ms around the ghats, soon took over ming religious ceremonies for the ors. Although they number about 500 in all, none of them, however, own any land or property, earning their livelihood by sitting at the ghats, rented to them by the Misra group.

Although the ghats were divided among the two groups of pandas through a judgement by the commissioner of Faizabad as far back as February 1972, the Misra group, however, now charge rent from the Bhadradias for occupying the ghats. The amount varies according to the importance of the ghats and is anything between Rs 2,000 and Rs 14,000 per annum. In addition to this the Misras take half of whatever the Bhadradias earn in the course of conducting religious ceremonies, as well as half of the *charhawa* (offerings) collected through various temples.

Although trouble between the two groups had been brewing for some time, things came to a head on October 13, 1982, when the agitated pandas with the support of the Saryu Ghat Pandas Sangharsh Samiti decided not to give the Misra group half their earnings. The move brought a violent reaction as lathi-wielding men beat the Bhadradias, injuring three of them seriously. In protest, the Bhadradias staged a dharna at the collectorate for seven days, following which a case was registered and the court ordered the removal of their shelters from the ghats.

Tough Stand: Ram Murti Singh, 35, a law graduate and an ex-student leader of the Samajvadi Yuvjan Sabha (SYS), and the leader of the samiti is one of the people who was lodged in prison. He pointed out that the aim of their struggle was to root out religious exploitation from Ayodhya and he claimed that nearly 5,000 pandas from Allahabad, Varanasi, Hardwar, Gaya and other places were ready to extend support to any agitation they launched.

With the situation coming to a head, and the pandas pushed to a verge of starvation, the two warring groups are all ready to hurl allegations and counter allegations against each other. A young panda, Ram Avtar Shastri alleged that Misra, who had contested the Municipal Corporation election thrice in the past and was a member of the Ram Rajya Parishad and now enjoys considerable backing of the Congress(I), is wealthy, powerful and has tremendous political clout. He also pointed out that a receiver appointed by the court at the ghats had been bribed and there were contradictory reports about who demolished the ghats, as according to him the police said the receiver, in collusion with Misra's men did it. But the receiver said the Bhadradias themselves were guilty.

Meanwhile Misra, living in a large palace-like house, on the main road of Ayodhya, dismissed all the allegations. He claimed that the land on the ghats belonged to his ancestors and was by right his. The Bhadradias, he spouted with contempt, were just low-cast beggars who had come to settle in Ayodhya. "It is we that have all the ancestral records of Hindus and we are the real purohits," he said. While Misra is understandably being supported by the Congress (I), the Bhadradias, on the other hand are under the wings of the Janata Party.

The district authorities, when asked for their view on the situation, declined to comment. "It is an ordinary criminal case and the law will take its course," said one official. The Uttar Pradesh Youth Congress leader and ex-minister Nirmal Khatri, who is the MLA from that area, was earlier supporting their cause, but after Kamalapati Tripathi became acting president of AICC(I), he lost interest in the matter.

S. PREMI

Ram Nath Misra: political clout

Demanding Policy: With religious activities at a standstill, the pandas are now earning a livelihood by pulling rickshaws, yet losing little of their determination to fight for their rights. Those lodged in jail say they will not leave jail until their demands are met. They want the ghats to be taken over by the Government and a regular policy for conducting *pujas*.

The ghats in the meanwhile, present a deserted look. Many pilgrims from various parts of the country, who came here for religious ceremonies are returning disappointed. A dead body was brought by Kanhai, 25, from nearby Basti district for cremation at Saryu ghat. "My father wished that he be cremated at Saryu. I cannot even fulfil his last wishes," he said.

The Chief Minister Sripat Misra visited Ayodhya recently. The pandas gave a three-point memorandum to Misra in which they demanded the take-over of the ghats; handing over the ghats to Bhadradias according to law; and an inquiry into the activities of Ram Nath Misra.

With tension prevailing in Ayodhya and both the groups adamant on their stand things may become explosive in this once peaceful city.

—S. PREMI in Ayodhy

RAW

Daggers Drawn

HARI OM GULATI

The RAW headquarters in New Delhi: rumblings in the ranks

THE CLOAK and dagger brigade is once again indulging in its favourite pastime of sharpening its daggers while rudely discarding its cloaks to reveal yet another upheaval in the ranks of the RAW (Research & Analysis Wing). The fuse was lit some time ago when it became apparent that RAW boss, N.F. Suntook's contract would not be renewed and that he will retire as scheduled on March 31, barely a fortnight from now.

The news was the starter's signal for some hectic and undignified bouts of lobbying by vested interests to influence the choice of his successor—which only succeeded in reaffirming the sad fact that India's intelligence agencies are now infected by the same virus that afflicts any bureaucratic organisation.

Infighting: The current battle is essentially between the powerful IPS (Indian Police Service) lobby in the Cabinet secretariat and the regular recruits who form a resentful core in the intelligence network. And, by last week, it was fairly obvious that the former had emerged bloody but victorious. According to Cabinet secretariat sources, the likely candidate for Suntook's chair is his current number two in the organisation, "Garry" Saxena, who also belongs to the IPS cadre.

Till last fortnight, there were indications that Saxena faced a strong challenge from K. Subrahmanyam, head of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) the Delhi-based quasi-government think-tank, whose name had been nominated for the post. A third contender was reportedly the former number two man in RAW during R.N. Kao's tenure, K. Shankaran Nair. However, Saxena now seems pretty certain to get the nod since the other two have come under the disqualification clause for one reason or another.

Both Subrahmanyam and Nair are ideally qualified for the job. The IDSA chief has close contacts with RAW, the Defence Ministry and the Cabinet secretariat, flowing from the nature of his job and his incisive knowledge of defence, nuclear and intelligence affairs, particularly in respect of Pakistan. Subrahmanyam's candidature, however, was shot down by the IPS lobby on the grounds that he is too obviously a hawk apart from being an "outsider".

Nair, whose candidature was vociferously supported by the regular recruits in RAW, was disqualified on the grounds that he is close to retirement age anyway, and that he will serve the cause better by finally taking up his scheduled appointment as a one-man committee to undertake a long-overdue "cadre review" of the country's intelligence agencies. The logical outcome, therefore, is that Saxena will get the top job in RAW unless there is a last minute change of heart or unexpected pressure from the very top.

At the moment, however, that seems highly unlikely. Saxena, despite his IPS bias, is highly respected within intelligence circles as well as highly experienced. He had a long innings with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) before joining RAW in the early '70s and so far his report cards contain no black marks. Nor has he been involved in any controversies and, in fact, makes it a point to steer strictly away from any. As one RAW source says: "He is the best of a bad lot"—a snide reference to the IPS lobby led by Suntook which has taken over complete control of RAW in the last three years.

Deteriorating Set-up: But even with his reputation for controlled efficiency, Saxena inherits a Pandora's box. Suntook year tenure, which began during the years when RAW was actively dow has seen the organisation decline highly efficient, low-profile set-up th the former foreign secretary Ra Dayal and Shankaran Nair had ham into. Internal bickering, *ad hoc* trans promotions and the induction of IPS into the top rungs, regardless of ta reduced the organisation to a squ circus with a consequent drop in tiveness.

Matters came to a head when an ployees' union was formed in 1981 for individual rights and welfare, lea an unprecedented strike and larg sackings. Finally, the issue was taken civil courts where more dirty linen wa hed. Shankaran Nair's appointment rupted by his Asiad assignment, is un kably an attempt to stem the rot tha during Suntook's tenure.

RAW officials detail innumerable ces of dishonoured promises. At the conference in 1978–79, a series of pr were made in response to officers' de Not a single one of these promises wa In fact, such about-turns are legendar instance is the refusal of the powers th upgrade the post of joint additional d to additional director. It was only wh apex council threatened to walk out th hastily capitulated. Similarly, a prop raise the level of special pay for offic been agreed to, but there is little ind that this is being worked upon.

Unenviable Task: If this were enough, there is a vertical sp the organisation, with the IPS ranged against the rest. With the IPS occupying the dominant positions regulars confined to the lower levels little wonder that RAW's efficiency and tiveness has taken a nosedive. All it show for its existence over the past five is a string of embarrassing failures, of its failure to anticipate the Banglades that toppled Zia-ur Rehman and put E in the saddle was the most glaring.

In this context, Saxena's task is viable. For one, he is caught in the pro cleft stick by virtue of his being an IPS He cannot clean up the mess left without antagonising people from his cadre who occupy the top spots in the nisation. On the other hand, if he is about rejuvenating RAW, he cannot thout effecting major changes at Either way, Saxena will be in a no-w tion. The only minor consolation the moment is that things couldn't be worse.

—DIL

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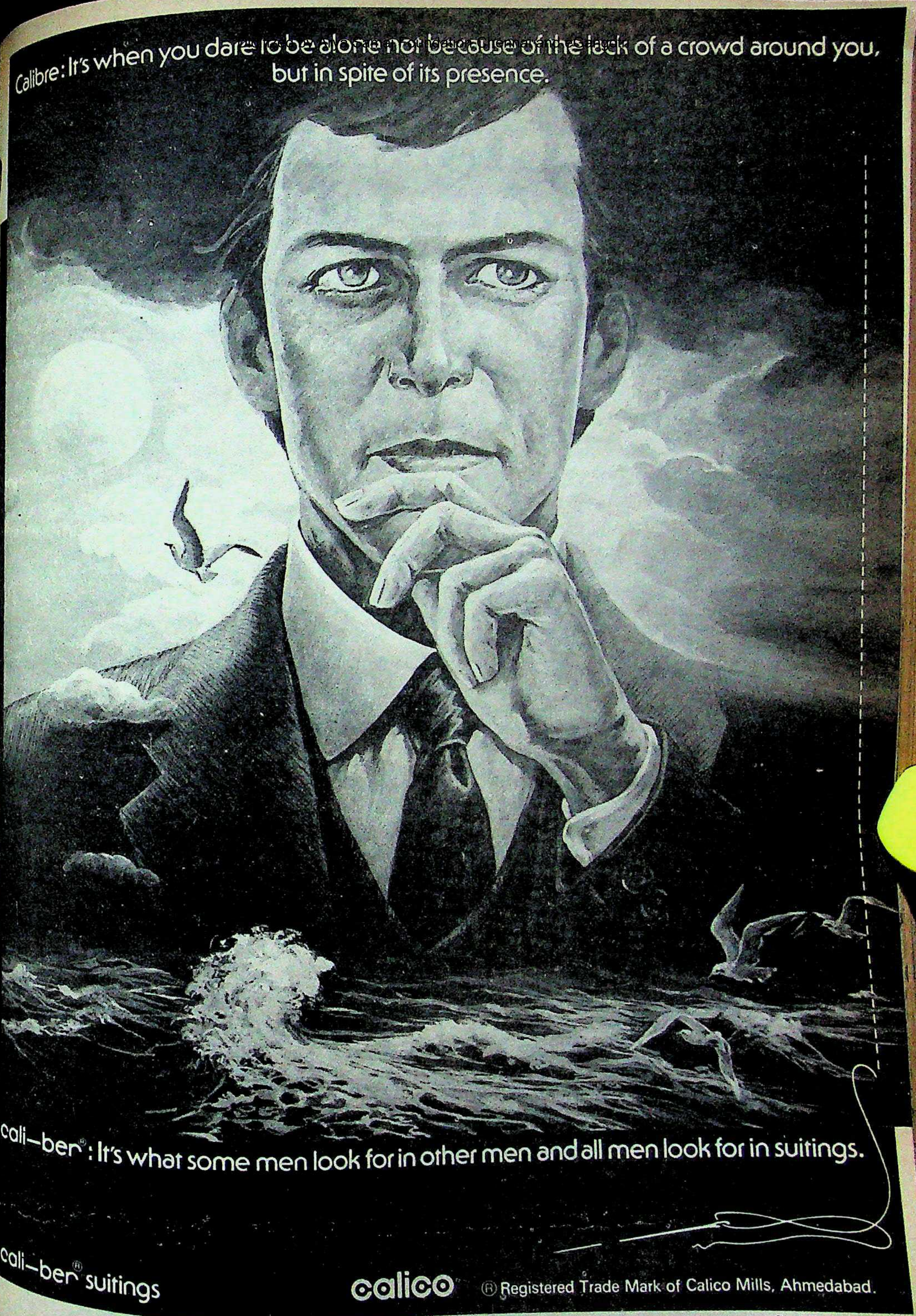
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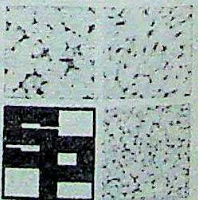

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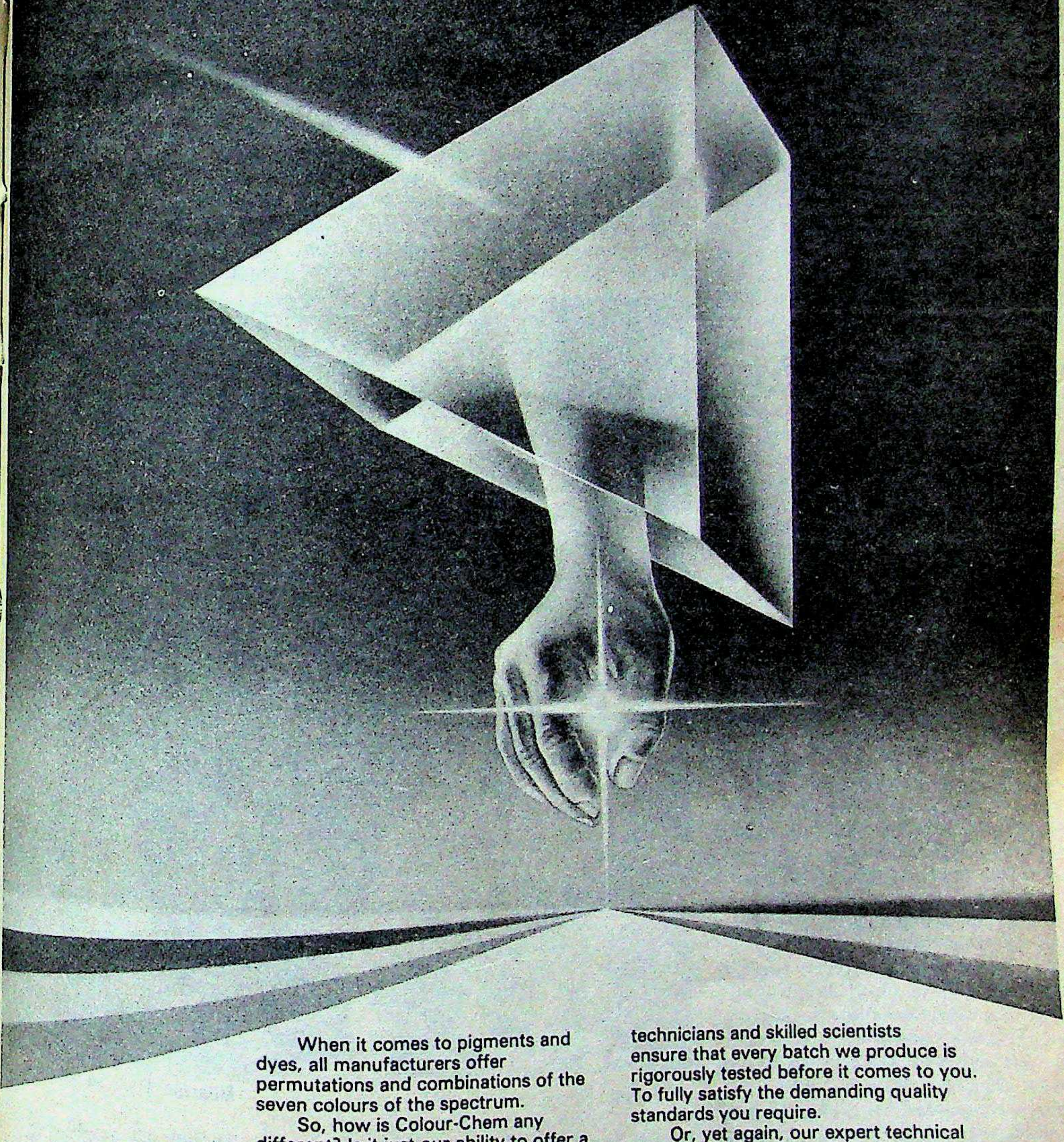

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J. DHARMA TEJA

Return Of The Prodigal

IT WAS the end of one of the most protracted and costly waits. When the mystical man, dapper and a statuesque six feet and four, finally arrived in Madras last month—literally through the country's backdoor—he could easily have cocked one of his steely deep-set eyes to say: peek-a-boo. But there was no reason for him to feel remorse or to hide. "Let us talk", he said about the 'side issue' of his Rs 9 crore alleged, unpaid tax dues, as though he were a smooth psychiatrist addressing neurotic taxmen.

Jayanti Dharma Teja, shipping tycoon, nuclear physicist, amateur versifier, musicologist, financial wizard and one of the country's most elusive operators in big money, has, at a stylishly balding 61, and after having tasted the hospitality of both the prime minister's house and two Indian prisons for years, mastered the art of keeping his cool. He sauntered into India after more than five years of absence, during which the Indian tax authorities had nearly given him up as untraceable. "I had just gone out for a few years. Is there a big commotion here? Why?" an unfazed Teja asked with an innocence that seemed almost pristine.

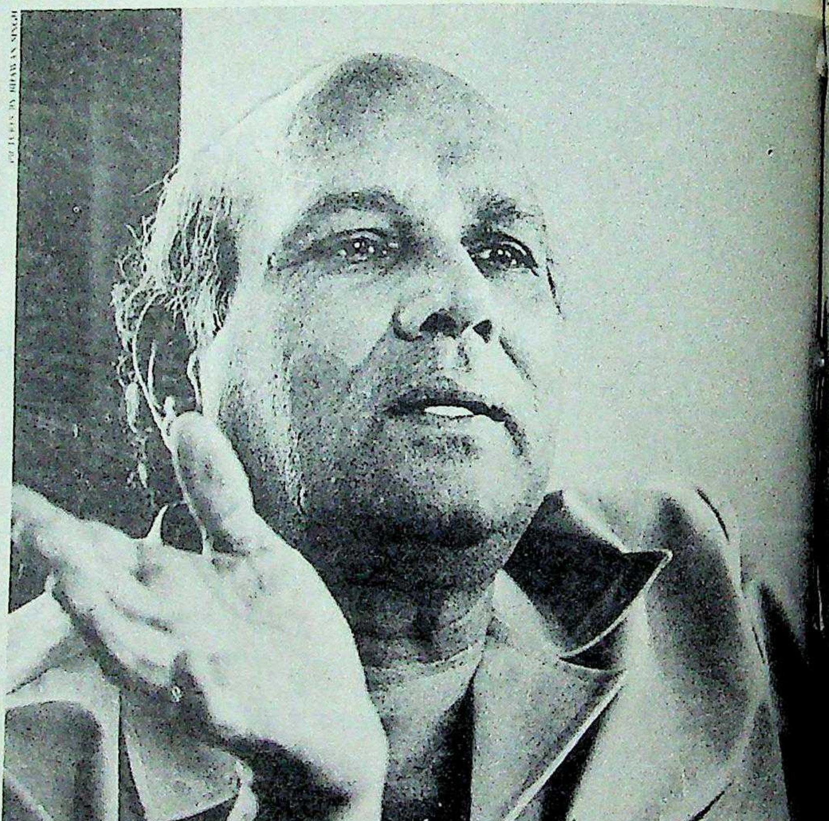
Jaundiced View: Others, particularly the income tax authorities, took a more jaundiced view. For if his return to India was unheralded and innocuous, his last departure almost six years ago had been quite the opposite. When Teja caught an early morning flight out of Delhi for Frankfurt one day in July 1977, he ignited the fuse in a parliamentary controversy which had the Janata government talking at cross purposes, the prime minister saying one thing and the Income Tax Department another.

Members of Parliament, ever eager in the scent of political blood, failed to understand why Teja, who allegedly owed the Income Tax Department Rs 4.8 crore in income tax and Rs 1 crore in wealth tax arrears at the time and was barred from acquiring a passport without special dispensation, had been able to leave the country. Teja had been sentenced on October 19, 1972 to three years in jail for forgery and falsification of the accounts of Jayanti Shipping Corporation, the grand merchant marine organisation headed by him. He also contravened the Passport Act, which debars anyone convicted for more than two years from acquiring a passport for five years from the date of conviction.

Yet Teja not only acquired a passport, he had made one trip out of the country in May 1977, a full five months before the restriction ran out. When the storm broke in Parliament, the confusion was worse confounded with the regional passport officer for Delhi, R.C. Pandey, and the income tax authorities contradicting each other: Pandey said that Teja had been "authorised by the Government to get his passport" while the taxmen disputed the claim.

In fact, Teja could have obtained his passport only if the office of the prime minister, or the home minister, cleared his application on discretionary grounds. But the decision needed to be announced in the official gazette. This was never done. Prime minister Morarji Desai didn't exactly shed clarity on the position when he told Parliament in 1978: "Teja is free to come and go whenever he chooses. The country has got more from him than what he owes."

Accumulating Arrears: Perhaps, but the income tax authorities declined to fall in line. In 1979 they added penalties and interest to the original dues and computed his arre Rs 6.5 crore. In December 1981 the Fin Ministry told the Lok Sabha that his inc tax arrears were Rs 7.17 crore and his we tax dues were Rs 1.76 crore. That put second in the nation's list of individual t evaders. The only other person on th who owes more to the exchequer is the leg dary Haridas Mundhra. But Mundhra declared insolvent by an order of the C cutta High Court as early as 1973.



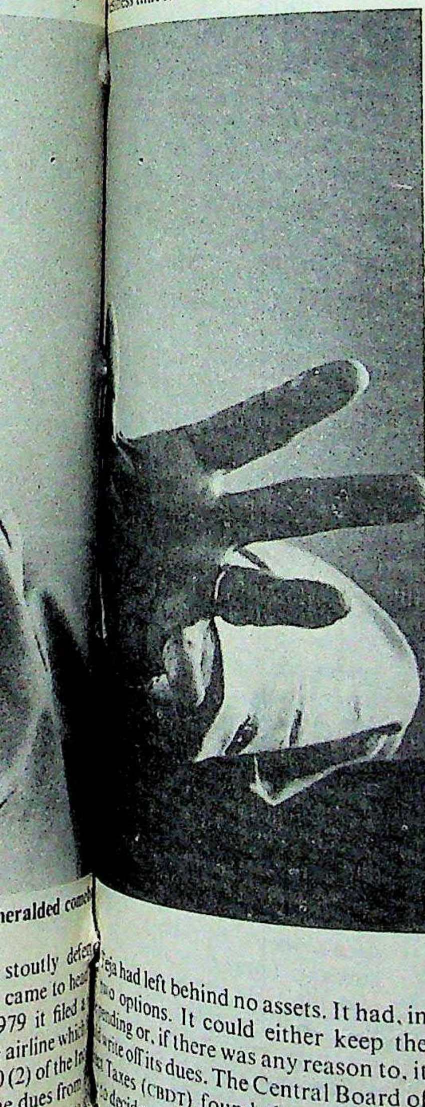
Dharma Teja: an unheralded com

Though Desai had stoutly defen Teja, when Charan Singh came to hea interim government in 1979 it filed a against Pan American, the airline whi Teja out under Section 230 (2) of the In Tax Act for recovery of the dues from The lawsuit took a byzantine cours that, with Pan American blaming Ai which endorsed the ticket, and Air-In turn, blaming the American carri trying to evade its primary responsi

The cause of all the turmoil see

purposes, totally oblivious of it to the point, if the Government had any claims to make, it seemed precious little to make them renewed his passport three times the city he made his home with his wife, Ranjeet Kaur, and their two And as the years wore, on, he old contacts: in 1981 he met Prime Indira Gandhi, an old family and flew to New York to meet her Rajiv Gandhi during their state visit US in July 1982.

Recoveries: For a while, the Finance continued to tote up penalties and on Teja's tax dues, dutifully pleading that it could make no recoveries



Teja had left behind no assets. It had, in two options. It could either keep the pending or, if there was any reason to, it write off its dues. The Central Board of Taxes (CBDT) found the arrears too to decide on its own. In December last merely detailed the options available Government on the matter. Normally can decide on arrears up to Rs 1 amounts in excess of that can be off, or kept in abeyance without punitive steps against the erring assessee, only by the Cabinet.

The Finance Ministry passed the buck upwards as soon as the CBDT had put in its comments on the file. Pattabhi Rama Rao, minister of state for revenue in the Finance Ministry, who like Teja is from Andhra Pradesh, told INDIA TODAY: "Dharma Teja's case is a sensitive matter. No decision has been taken at my level." Pranab Mukherjee, the pipe-chomping finance minister, parried all questions regarding Teja in his characteristic style, saying that the Government is "considering all possibilities and their implications". However, Finance Ministry sources aver that Teja's case is coming up before the Cabinet in a few weeks from now.

WHILE the bureaucracy in New Delhi's North Block, seat of the Finance Ministry, spent time shining the apple, Teja had a clear view of what could lie ahead of him etched in his mind. He had his arguments ready and was confident that he would not be made to pay his dues. Though he denies having sniffed what was going on in the ministry regarding his case ("Believe me, I'd only one place for those notes I used to receive periodically from some body in the Income Tax Department: and that's the waste paper basket") it is clear that he got wind of the new development. This emboldened him to return to India.

Sitting in the comfortable guest-house of Progressive Construction Company, a "friend's firm" and gazing out at the city of Hyderabad from the top of the Banjara hillock, Teja outlined his defence. Said Teja: "The tendency of the Income Tax Department, or what have you, is to keep on building a case. I was a non-resident Indian. Any money sent by me from abroad is therefore non-taxable, both for income tax and wealth tax. And since I had no income in India, the question of income tax never arose. Finally, the ex-prime minister's statement that I gave to the exchequer more than what I owed it puts the matter beyond the domain of all disputes."

Teja fulminated at the bureaucracy saying: "I'm not going to spend much time worrying over what wise guys in the tax department think I should shell out", and announced with a touch of finality: "Certain things can be terminated only by a Cabinet intervention." In fact the current exercise to reduce or waive his tax arrears is the product of an appeal made by him as early as 1980 to Mrs Gandhi. Teja admits having written a letter, but says he addressed it to "the Union Cabinet" and "not to individuals". He betrays no signs of nervousness. "I'm going to live here and I'm looking for a house," he declares deftly nailing the point that he is not anxious any longer that the taxmen may attach his assets.

This is not the first time that Teja's political connections have come in handy. In 1961, when he launched his shipping operation in India, Jawaharlal Nehru, his admiring benefactor, had advised on his loan application from the Shipping Development Fund that he "be given something" towards the purchase of bulk carriers and oil tankers. The "little something" totted up to Rs 20 crore.

Jayanti Shipping Corporation fattened in record time, acquiring 26 ships in five years and hogging 40 per cent share of the nation's shipping tonnage. But it was a bubble that would have burst sooner or later. After Nehru's death in 1964, his detractors threw a noose round Teja, producing piles of evidence concerning his under-the-table deals with giant international shipyards like Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. They also alleged that Teja was being protected by the Government because of his closeness to Nehru and Mrs Gandhi, who had become the prime minister in early 1966. Finally, Mrs Gandhi ordered an enquiry into the affairs of Jayanti Shipping Corporation in August 1966.

On the basis of the enquiry committee's findings, and charge-sheet made by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Teja was convicted in 1972. Eight separate charges of criminal breach of trust, forgery and falsification of accounts were proved against him at the end of a year-long legal battle, during which the prosecution had presented 33 witnesses, including four from Japan and one from Britain.

Low Profile: Teja had given the CBI a run for its money before he could be brought to book. In 1966, as the news of his company's take-over reached him on the house telex at his resort in Cannes on the French Riviera, Teja and his wife quietly slipped out of Europe and surfaced in New York, a city whose anonymity shielded them for a while from the insistent gaze of the Indian police, and later on, the Interpol.

But Teja was too outgoing a personality to be cocooned in anonymity. He moved to and fro between New York and Long Island, as he had houses in both places. He found a research post for himself at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, where he pursued his abiding interest in nuclear physics. But the long arm of law reached him there, and New Delhi could put just enough diplomatic pressure on the US Administration to arrest the couple for "overstaying". At the same time, the Indian Government began extradition proceedings against the couple. While the hearings were on, the Tejas sprang another surprise, this time by jumping the bail of $10,000 (Rs 1 lakh). They flew down to San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, to live under the protective wing of Jose Figueras.

alias Don Pepe, Teja's old chum and president of the republic.

It is still a mystery why the Latin American nations went all out to shelter Teja for three years with jobs, security and legal defence. In San Jose, Teja obtained a commission to help the Costa Rican Government in developing power plants and building up its own fleet of banana ships. The Indian authorities did their best to hound him out of his haven by carrying the extradition proceedings right up to the Costa Rican Supreme Court. But Figueras arranged elaborate legal defence. Antonio Picado, former chief justice of the Supreme Court, defended him against a battery of counsels brought in by the Indian Government from the US. Teja finally won the case, and President Fernando Tregos, who had come into power in the wake of Figueras's electoral defeat, upheld the decision of the Costa Rican court.

Teja's friends in San Jose even armed him with a diplomatic passport, on the strength of which he could venture out of Costa Rica to mingle again with his peers in international finance and politics, most of whom were based in France and Switzerland. On one such trip, Teja was finally nabbed, changing planes at Heathrow, by Scotland Yard acting on behalf of Interpol.

Astonishing Claims: It was during the hearing of India's extradition plea in a London court that Teja made a determined bid to wash a heap of dirty linen in public, hoping to bully his way out of Britain. During the famous hearing, Teja and his counsel, Lord Dingle Foot, told an astonished court that:

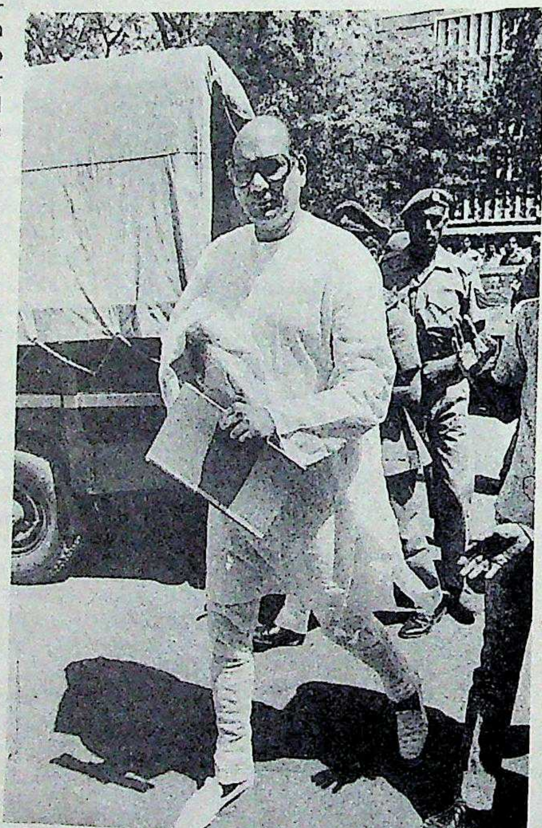
- he (Teja) did diplomatic work for India by running secret missions to the Soviet Union at the time of the Chinese aggression;
- he arranged a meeting between Nehru and Charles de Gaulle, the late French president;
- he negotiated an Asian Security Pact with Japan against China; and
- he was considered for an ambassadorial posting in the US.

The Indian authorities, though no end embarrassed by Teja's provocative utterances, finally won the extradition case and Teja was brought back to India. So, after spending nine months in the jails of Brixton and Pentonville, Teja landed at New Delhi's Tihar Jail.

The Teja trial went on for months at the court of the Delhi Sessions Judge, Muni Lal Jain, and drew international headlines. The CBI pulled out all its stops to make the charges against Teja stick. The clincher was the evidence given by Fumiho Karaki, vice-president of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries of Tokyo, who told a dumbfounded court that his company had paid $220,500 to Teja, and his Tokyo agent for the purchase of three vessels.

Apart from this, the 360-page judgement held Teja guilty on seven other counts. Some of these are:

- he had dishonestly instructed Mitsubishi to add to the agreed actual price of eight bulk carriers a 2 per cent commission accruing to him only and amounting to $18,560;



Teja during his trial in 1971

- he had forged a copy of the resolution of Jayanti Shipping Corporation's board, inducing Mitsubishi to siphon $1.2 million to his private account in London;
- he had been a party to rampant falsification of accounts by Jayanti Shipping, which were frequently objected to even by the internal auditors; and
- he had kept to himself one shilling out of every tonne of freight carried by the Jayanti vessel, *Chandragupta Maurya*.

Teja was convicted on October 19, 1972, and was shifted from Tihar to Hyderabad. During his captivity, he wrote four papers on

INTERVIEW

"It's Never Too Late"

FOR JAYANTI Dharma Te elusive former shipping tycoon wh five years in British and Indian j three years more in Costa Rica a tive, no place can be had enough. B still surprising to find him in a wind room, air-conditioned but dingy, grimy innards of a fleabag hotel in town Hyderabad, amid ruins of m and minarets.

Teja said he had chosen the ro no particular reason except that "I to stay away from the crowd of VIPs more respectable boarding houses." stood out as an oddity in the lounge of the "pure vegetarian" e ment, jauntily shining in contrast. H coloured executive suit stared out f background of the hotel's mostly and-shirt-clad clientele.

Apparently he too feels un meet guests there, and receives the richly upholstered guest-house of a contractor's firm atop the Banjara in the city's outskirts. The heavy drawl in his voice combines with hi cist's precision and urbane hum does not move while speaking, and no emotion. Only his heavy finger the arm-rest while making

Last fortnight, he met INDIA *Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA *for rambling chat that wound its way first an udupi breakfast, and then a continental lunch. He spoke of his times, about the cases against him his tax problem, and reflected on th nomic scene. Excerpts:*

Q. ***People here have always sp ed on your long-standing connecti the Nehru family. Is your return related to this?***

A. These are two different q aren't they? Let me set the straight. I was very close to Mr N and there is nothing secret about knew him not in the '50s or the way back in my childhood when h close to my family. I have been to cial house of Teen Murti B number of times, and it so happe Mrs Gandhi was the hostess ther an outstanding person. Well, ye her. I also knew her two childre But an awful lot of hogwash ha talked about my relations wi family. The rumours about my with the Nehrus being remunerative in any way were all concocted by the some sources that sought to harass me and hound me out of three continents.

Q. *How did you come back?*

A. Like any other citizen of India. I mean, by travelling on my own passport, which is an Indian passport.

Q. *The Government of India maintained that you'd disappeared in 1977.*

A. Oh really? I don't know if this information is relevant, but the fact is that I got my Indian passport renewed not once but four times at the Indian embassy in Geneva, the latest occasion being in December 1982. I met many Indian dignitaries in the interim.

Q. *Do you know that the taxmen here have a lot of questions to ask you?*

A. I am tired of hearing about this. I don't recognise any tax demand made on me primarily because I am a non-resident Indian, and I had no income accrued in India. This applies to the wealth tax demands as well. I can understand if they have treated some money spent on my travels in India as income. That will work out to something less than Rs 100,000. But I always spent my own money while travelling in India. So even that question does not arise.

Q. *Your tax arrears are shown as something over Rs 8 crore. Why didn't you appeal against it?*

A. What's the use? It is always the habit of income tax people to keep on making demands. Certain things can be terminated—I mean finally terminated—only by the Cabinet's intervention.

Q. *How did you get out of India in 1977? Were your papers in order?*

A. Absolutely. No one can travel without valid papers, and I was no exception. I had to go back to Europe because my wife and the two younger children were there. My wife was complaining, and justly so, that I could not give my two younger children the same kind of time that I could give to my other two children, born out of my first marriage, you see. So I decided to leave.

Q. *Do you feel persecuted? Do you think some people were after you all the time for ulterior motives?*

A. Under the circumstances, I have every reason to suspect so. I think Nehru's detractors used me as an excuse to whip up a scandal. There is no weapon which is more powerful than scandal. I have seen this in newly-independent African countries; I have seen this in Latin America. And I have suffered this in India.

I must tell you that I did not want to start Jayanti Shipping Corporation. It is Mr Nehru who thrust it on me. At that time, Jayaprakash Narayan warned me against coming to India as a rich man, but Nehru prevailed on me. He did so not because he loved me but because there was a policy shift in the Government. In a way I was helping India take shipping outside the orbit of a continuing British influence. Many people did not like it. Then there were others who wanted to denigrate Mr Nehru and thought that by denigrating me they would have half the job done.

Q. *Was it an example of the public sector gunning for the private sector?*

A. No, no. All these nomenclatures are confusing. But the bureaucrats certainly resented me. When you have the notion of public sector, and the Government as authority defines what is public sector and what is private, it is the secretary who becomes quasi-businessman. They develop an ownership interest. In the USSR, the Government simply knock down the technocrat who fancies himself as an owner. But here you don't have a party discipline.

"I don't recognise any tax demand made on me primarily because I am a non-resident Indian, and I had no income accrued in India. This applies to the wealth tax demands as well."

Q. *What are your plans in India?*

A. I want to settle down here. Maybe I'll set up some business.

Q. *Did you keep in touch with the problems of Indian economy lately?*

A. Yes, yes. The problem is one of size and vision. The targets for capital formation and growth in India look to me as miniscule efforts to project India into the industrial era. I have told a number of people that the gross national product of India is only about seven times the net income of Geneva, a city of half-a-million people. Then you have the human factor, the factor of little civil servants behaving like big bosses. I think all these were ignored when the late Professor Prasanta Mahalanabis laid the foundation-stone of Indian planning.

Q. *Do you think Mrs Gandhi wants to shift the economy into a different gear? Do you think she needs people like you?*

A. I don't see why an individual has to be dragged in each time we refer to the prime minister's office. It is time we de-emphasised the individual and spoke objectively. But the Government must decide to shift its policies at some stage. It should also make way for more and more economic federalism. Planning is necessary, but it is necessary only at the level of monitoring. This should be distinguished from administrative planning.

Q. *What did you do all these years?*

A. Wrote research papers on nuclear physics. Spent time with my wife and kids. On weekends, did a bit of skiing, or went to the Mediterranean for swimming. I love that ocean.

Q. *What prompted you to start a shipping business in India?*

A. It is Mr Nehru who suggested that I give him a brief report on how to sharpen the image of Indian shipping. That was 1960. India has a huge mass of seagoing people, and shipping is an international public utility. So, I thought a lot could be done in that sector. Alternatively I told Mr Nehru that a man like me could probably take up vigorously developing the steel sector. But he insisted on my involvement in shipping. I gave him a small plan, a three-page thing, giving only the kernel of an idea, detailing how to use the standard methods of trade financing. Shipping, as you know, is a highly subsidised industry. It is also a slump industry. People normally don't understand the vital connection between shipping and government.

Q. *What do you say about the charges against you?*

A. The criminal charges were all trumped up. I had no compulsion to run away from India. But they involved my wife in the same cases. I wrote to the ministers and politicians, requested them to keep my wife out. I was prepared to come to India and face any question.

Q. *How did you react to your arrest in London?*

A. I told Appa Pant (then the Indian high commissioner in the UK) that I'd go to India. But he said: "I'm sorry, but my instructions are different."

Q. *What was prison life like?*

A. I never felt cut off from life outside. My visitors included a number of dignitaries. Captivity allowed me to catch up on my reading and writing.

Q. *Do you have any rancour left?*

A. No, none at all. I have been through all kinds of experiences, but my confidence in man was never shaken. It is never too late to start again.

mentary particles, and completed a lume of love poems, written in the manner Dante, but, as he says now, "it has many osodic innovations and is set to music". his volume, called Penelope, will be publis-d this summer in the US. Example:

Love is forever a young flower
ageless ancient
and passion its fragrance.

When we love our laced hearts breathe
we must shed a little blood
for crimson passion to feed us flowers.

WHILE Teja was alternating between *terza rima* and particle physics, the image of his company had been sullied beyond laundering in the public mind. In 1973, it was finally merged in the public sector Shipping Corporation of In by an ordinance. Today Teja is unrepenta and ready to retrieve his lost glory—by arg ments, to start with.

He maintains he did a good turn to t country, having purchased ships at 14 p cent lower than the lowest internatio price prevaiking at that time. He says he w given a raw deal because the compensat

BACKGROUND

Illustrious Beginnings

FOR A man who has been in gaol and come to be surrounded by the aura of glamorous controversy, Dharma Teja had surprisingly illustrious beginnings. His father, Jayanti Venkat Narayan Teja, had renounced Brahminism, taken an oath of poverty, and became a missionary of the Brahmo Samaj founded by Raja Rammohun Roy in the early part of the 19th century. The elder Teja, who was born into an enlightened family, also plunged into the nationalist struggle after a period of government service.

He resigned from his career as a judicial magistrate in 1911 and helped set up Brahmo missions all over India, from Chittagong in erstwhile East Bengal to Nainital in the shadow of the northern Himalayas. He was among the founders of the Congress units in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, and was imprisoned by the British six times until his death in the '40s. His wife, Surama, was the first woman in south India to be imprisoned as a nationalist. She went to jail five times.

Teja takes pains to mention at frequent intervals that their home at Berhampore was visited by the entire galaxy of contemporary nationalist Indians, including Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jayaprakash Narayan, and, of course, Jawaharlal Nehru. He says the Mahatma was present at their house at the time of his birth in 1922 when his mother named him "Dharma". Then, as if realising its ironic implication, says he: "Of course I've nothing but my mother's account of it to go by."

Academic Achievements: Between the singing of Brahmo hymns and chanting of the Upanishads, Teja grew up as a brilliant student, a linguist and a mathematical genius. He took his masters degree in physical chemistry at Mysore University, and then did a year's stint at Sevagram near Wardha, the ashram founded by Gandhi. Came Independence and Teja was in Britain, being exhorted by "family friend" Krishna Menon to take up research in one of the British universities.

But, Teja, like many visitors to England of that generation, was appalled by the country's "griminess and overcrowding". So, disregarding the advice of Menon, whom he always found to be an "Anglophile", Teja left for the United States where he took up a fellowship at the biochemistry department of Purdue University. But he had already decided to switch to nuclear physics. An opportunity came when the celebrated Enrico Fermi of the Fermi Institute in Chicago University called him to work. After a brief orientation in necessary mathematics, he plunged headlong into high-gear physics, under the benign eyes of Fermi and his wife, Laura.

In his high-adrenaline upward climb, Teja allowed himself to be identified a bit too closely with Nehru. This backfired after Nehru's death when Lohia began to gun for him and Lal Bahadur Shastri willy-nilly encouraged criticism of Teja in and out of Parliament.

But he flunked the qualifying examinations at the Fermi Institute, a consolation being that "Einstein too had repeatedly flunked them". Adds Teja: "I failed the exams because I was in love with Betsy (the American whom he later married) and because I was careless." In Chicago, and later at Princeton, Teja got to know Einstein, Oppenheimer, Goldberger, and the entire gamut of big-league American physicists of the time. "At Princeton", reminisces Teja, "I gave a talk in which Einstein was among the audience."

Financial Success: However, Fermi finally had to recommend him to the industry which, in post-war America, was leapfrogging in scale and ingenuity. He took over as executive vice-president of a company called Mystic Tape, which made magnetic tapes, and literally pulled it up by the bootsraps, taking its US $10 million turn-over to US $30 million when he left it in 1955. He says he left Mystic Tape because he had refused to yield to the McCarthyist demand for sacking a scientific officer in the company.

Teja says he put together a chain of research laboratories in the US in league with a number of research collaborators. In the meantime, he had got himself enrolled at Cerne in Switzerland, a giant nuclear research institute where 1,600 scientists worked and got his Ph.D. from there. His American laboratories sold processes to the companies, sometimes at a price of over a million dollars for a single process, and he claims to have earned, on an average, US $1,000 a day, "excluding the windfalls". His laboratories sold processes for liquid laser for treating ordinary paper—curiously—with aspirin, and for devising a sort of soluble progesterone hormone that broke new path in oral contraception.

In 1960, Teja says he had acquired two ships ("bought, not chartered"), half a dozen research laboratories in the US and houses spread over Europe and America, including one at the picturesque town of Marni, 100 km from Rome. "I was tired of making money, and I had a yearning to do something for my country," he remembers with misty eyes.

So he came to New Delhi with his wife, met Nehru, and it was indeed a return to old times. The couple was invited to dinner at Teen Murti Bhavan, the home of the prime minister, and, as Teja now says, he was asked to choose is own holding in the company was ed on the basis of the market value of shares, and as per the net asset value of company. At the time of the take-over had 78 per cent shares in the company, entitled him to a compensation of Rs crore. It was given to him as late as 31, 1979 in 10-year Defence Bonds. that too was promptly attached by the Income Tax Department to be adjusted against his arrears.

Later on, the Finance Ministry said it had attached the compensation against his arrears of income tax and wealth tax. But, says Teja: "I have no knowledge of any compensation being paid to me. I have only heard about it." He argues that he could not have made an income in India, because he had not been paid any dividend on his shares. At any rate, even if he had been paid any dividend, the income tax on it would have been deducted at source. The Finance Ministry never clarified these doubts, thus allowing the impression that Teja might well have been more sinned at than sinning

It is likely that the much-awaited "Cabinet intervention" will come soon, thus clearing the deck for Teja's final rehabilitation in India. "I never wanted to be away from India," he says, adding that "even in 1977, when I left the country, I had plans for coming back. I only wanted to be for a while with my wife and the two younger children."

Teja back in India: a desire to build

Buccaneering Spirit: Urbane and civilised, Teja carries with him the quiet grandeur of aristocracy, which at times seems at variance with his record as a convicted embezzler. He speaks with the fine-honed precision of a campus academic, but, beneath the caution and order, there lurks a buccaneering spirit, the restless craving to explore the mystique of money and power.

Teja's imposing frame now retains only a shadow of its past attractiveness, but his dreams are still as fecund as before. Prior to reaching Madras, he spent a fortnight in Sri Lanka, meeting President J.R. Jayawardene, and negotiating a plan to pipe power into India from a thermal plant of 3,500 megawatts set up at Trincomalee. "We want to buy coal from Australia—good, high-grade, low-ash coal—and will provide power in India at a price not exceeding six paise a unit. Do you understand that it is much cheaper than India's current cost of power production of 14 paise a unit?"

Teja claims he can arrange for $4 billion from international credit organisations "just like that" for the project. In a long and circuitous conversation, punctuated by a lunch of chateubriands and wine, he drops hints of his recent conversation with major international banks and credit organisations who are "willing to offer India credit up to $40 billion, provided we agree to some of their conditions". What conditions? "Not much. Only rupees currency worth $10 billion should be made convertible. Why should eye-brow get raised at that? Isn't that how Brazil ha come up, even little and prosperous islan states of South-east Asia have come up?"

Teja speaks with considerable anima tion about the January polls in his hom state, Andhra Pradesh; he met N.T. Ram Rao, the chief minister, for half-an-hour i Hyderabad last fortnight. He speaks of "eco nomic federalism", and the necessity for th citizenry to plan for itself instead of plan being foisted from top. He refers to M Gandhi without any emotion, saying " don't ever remember past bitterness Though he is conducting himself in Indi with the deftness of a trapeze-artiste, he ha not given up his dreams. "Some day I wa to build up something again in India," says, and leaves the audience guessing. Is the promise of a creative chapter? Or just th premonition of another round of whe ling-and-dealing?

—SUMIT MITR

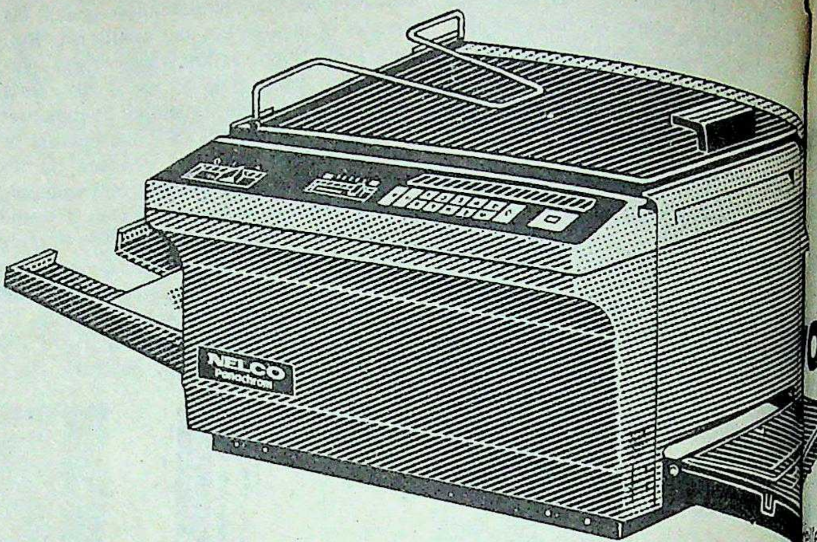
two areas: shipping and steel. He shipping, and left a three page note strategy to develop Indian shipping

New Associations: On their way to Europe, the Tejas stopped at where Betsy suddenly developed fection of the nervous system. She within a day. Within months, Teja married again, this time to Ranjeet, a girl he had met in New York years earlier. Ranjeet was a al Cadet Corps champion in India had read economics in the US. In Teja and Ranjeet came back to ia and the chequered saga of Jayanti ing Corporation began that year. Morarji Desai as a senior member the Cabinet, launching the corporation's first vessel.

Jayanti grew fast as a result of Teja's ity in securing international credit, 100 per cent, for the purchase of carriers and tankers. "I regarded ng as international public utility," he, "and I also had to reckon with fact that shipping all over the world is ly subsidised industry." At a time the Government policy favoured sition of 7,000 DWT to 10,000 DWT ls, Teja went ahead full tilt for the hase of giant carriers, aggressively ching business from the protected ference lines", a hangover from the sh days and a system that operates a closed-door cartel.

In his high-adrenaline upward h, Teja allowed himself to be identified a bit too closely with Nehru. This fired after Nehru's death in 1964, Lohia began to gun for him and Lal adur Shastri willy-nilly encouraged sm of Teja in and out of the ament. Mrs Gandhi came to power 1966, and Lohia charged in the ament that she had accepted an sive mink coat as a gift from Teja. charge was hotly denied by Mrs dhi, but Teja was doomed as ctim of his friendship with the rus—a cross others have found heavy bear.

When you can give away the or al an



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CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH

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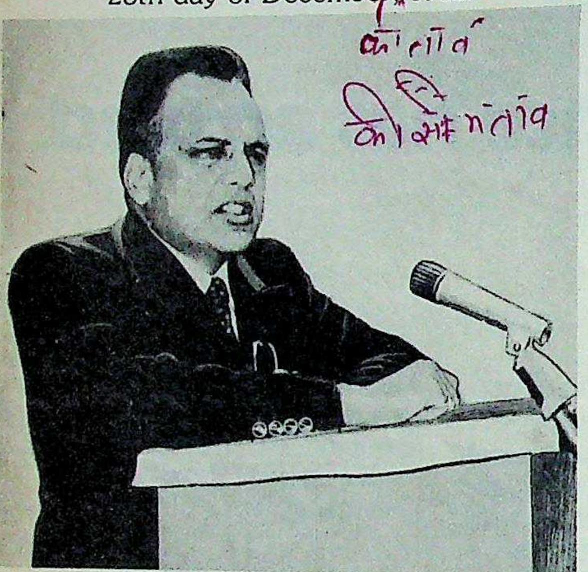
The following is the address of the Chairman Sh. O.P. Jindal at the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 28th day of December 1982.



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O.P. JINDAL Chairman

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is again my privilege to welcome you, the shareholders of the Company to this 11th Annual General Meeting of your Company. I also express my sincere thanks to all of you for having spared your valuable time and attending this Annual General Meeting. I also take this fine opportunity to wish you all in person the most happy and prosperous New Year.

The Directors' Report, Auditors' Report and the audited statements of Accounts for the period from 1st January, 1981 to 30th June, 1982 (for a period of 18 months) have been with you for sometime and with your permission I take them as read.

We are meeting at a time when almost all the industrialised countries are facing recessionary conditions. The developing countries are bound to be affected. In India the impacts have been more because of erratic monsoon and perennial shortage of power. We have a dynamic Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi with whose concept of strong and stable Government at the Centre and policies pursued by her, the derailed economy has been put on sound gears and inflation has been contained. Further with the assurance of credit ease policy given by the new Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Dr. Man Mohan Singh, renewed confidence has been inculcated within the industrial circles.

It is gratifying to note that the performance of your Company continued to be very much promising as compared to that of the previous year, despite heavy odds and constraints. The last accounting period is related to 18 months duration from 1st January, 1981 to 30th June, 1982. The change in the accou year was preferred, in order to coincide the closing date of accounting year of M/s. Nalwa Steels Ltd., which was taken over as a subsidiary Company of Jindal Strips Ltd., by way of investment in the shares of the said Company by more than 50% with the approval of the appropriate authorities. During period under report, your Company has shown very good results with its turnover of finishd products being increased Rs. 43.75 crores as against the turnover of Rs. 16.53 crores during the previous year, thus showing an yearly improveme of 76.40% over the previous year. The profit before interest depreciation during the period under report was at Rs. 3.00 crores as against the profit of Rs. 1.70 crores during the previous year. The depreciation was provided at Rs. 33.04 lac during the period under report, as against a depreciation of Rs. 14.56 lacs during the previous year. The net profit after providing depreciation and Investment Allowance Reserves amounted to Rs. 183.98 lacs as against Rs. 116.77 lacs durin previous year. During the period under consideration the company has donated a sum of Rs. 50.00 lacs to a rural development trust named, "VIDYA DEVI JINDAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST", undertaking a rural developme project viz. construction and running of a Public School na "VIDYA DEVI JINDAL PUBLIC SCHOOL", near Hissar (Haryana). The above said rural development trust is duly approved by the prescribed authorities u/s 35CCA of the Income-Tax Act, 1961, therefore, the net profit after donat Rs. 50.00 lacs which remained with the Company was at Rs. 133.98 lacs only. In spite of better achievements made during the current period, the proportionate achievements a compared to the previous year could not be made because unfavourable economical conditions and global recession in market.

I must say that we would have achieved heartening achievements, but there has been steep increase in the cos production, persistent hike in power tariff and shortage of power. Main inputs such as Nickel, Ferro Chrome and rig type of Refractories continued to be in short supply. The position was further aggravated by unscrupulous and ramp imports of stainless steel items in the guise of assumed na owing to the loop-holes in the import policy and custom ta which had a devastating impact not only on the domestic market but also led to collosal loss to the National Exche The Union Government intervened and took corrective measures as a result of which these malpractices got stop But a constant vigil is very much essential and much more could be done in this regard. The Government has to bal the imports keeping in view the availability of indigenous sources.

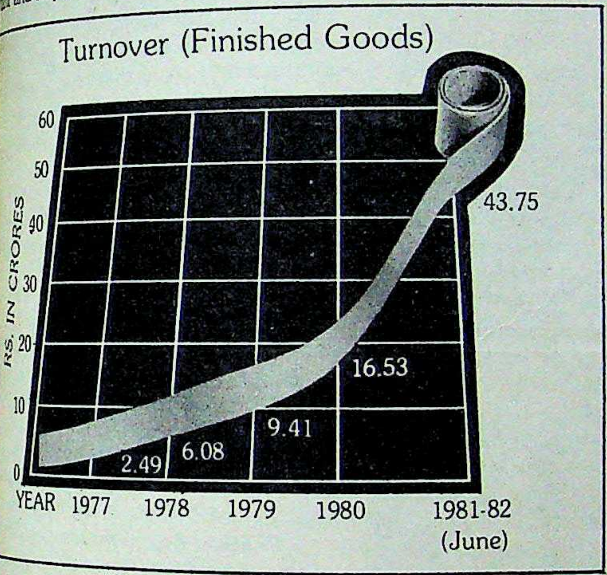
All of you know that your industry is very much power oriented. This year too, the state of Haryana has been ra under severe shortage of power. As a result, we have be experiencing acute shortage of power, further punctuated b unannounced load restrictions and total power cuts imp BBMB. I had stated in the last meeting that we had plan import a suitable generating set from U.S.A. and I am p to inform you that a 5000 K.W. secondhand generator b

□ BDK-JSL-588-L

man's Speech Contd.

od running condition, has since been imported and is under allation. I hope, we would be able to generate power from it in a month or so.

om the day that I have been at the helm of affairs, I have en pursuing the policy to adopt new technology achieved by of experimentation and to design and erect new machines, quired in the process, all by ourselves, without any knowhow m outside. My young team of Engineers and workers have rked with me in the same direction. We have succeeded in dernizing our mill, improving our quality and in diversifying r product. I, therefore, hope that we would continue to sue this policy. During the current year we trust that we uld start getting deliveries of the ordered Continuous Casting nt and hope to commission the same.



m proud of mentioning that we have been granted ISI licence r producing Hot Rolled Stainless Steel Strips. This has been ssible due to the commendable and appreciable work done y our R&D team by maintaining vigorous quality control both uring in-process and after process checks. I am happy to say at because of maintaining quality of our products, the oducts continued to be in commendable demand by the gineering Industries, Automobile Industries, Railways, fence Services, Construction Projects, Agricultural, Thermo jects etc.

r your information I wish to say that at the time of inception Strip Mill in 1971 we were granted licence for the nufacturing of 15,000 M.Ts. per annum of Hot Rolled Strips ainst the installed capacity of 60,000 M.Ts. per annum. In suance of the licensing relaxations allowed by the vernment of India, we have taken up the matter with the vernment of India for the regularization of the same. Further der the same relaxations, we were allowed to manufacture ld rolled strips. The Letter of Intent for the manufacturing of 500 M.Ts. was granted to us last year. Keeping in view the ourable market and other conditions, we have decided to set this Cold Rolling Unit at Village Vasind, Bombay. We have eady taken up the matter with the Government of India, and with the Governments of Haryana and Maharashtra and we pe to commence production soon. As your Company has dergone expansion by installing one more unit at Bombay d have also over come the shortage of power, hence we hope to achieve the sales target of not less than Rs. 60 crores during the ensuing year ending 30th June, 1983.

I must express my gratitude towards the State Government, th Hon'ble Chief Minister Sh. Bhajan Lalji and the Local administrators for their timely help and patronizing us wheneve we approached them. The Hon'ble Chief Minister, gave me much encouragement to develop our products — which is an import substitution — so as to help save the much needed foreign exchange

I express my special appreciation and gratefulness to New Ban of India, Industrial Development Bank of India, Industrial Credi & Investment Corpn. of India Ltd., Haryana State Industrial Development Corpn. Ltd., State Industrial & Investment Corp of Maharashtra, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corpn. and Haryana Financial Corpn. for extending their fullest co-operation to us, not as a customer but also working with us as a team in pursuance of the Prime Minister's 20 Point Programme.

I have all along been maintaining and it is my confirmed view today also, that to have a sound and durable industrial environment there should be a close rapport between the management and the workers. There should be no communication gap and that if the workers are listened to, the genuine grievances are solved and raw good floor workers are given opportunities to be promoted as mistries etc., there will not be any industrial unrest. On the contrary they will be mor loyal and a family atmosphere would be created. In this atmosphere the outside professional elements and leaders wou fail to exploit the innocent workers for their own selfish ends. am very proud of my workers and express my sincere thanks them for discharging their duties honestly and diligently.

My thanks are also due to the Selling Agents, who have rendered valuable services in maintaining the tempo of promoting the sales of the Company's products in different markets in India.

I also put on record my gratitude and appreciation of my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their fullest co-operation and healthy suggestions, keeping in view the changi times and also to all ranks of the staff for the utmost, untiring, dedicated, loyal and sincere services rendered by them towarc the up-liftment of your Company.

JAI HI

	Period from Jan. 81 to June, 82	Year ended December, 1980
FINANCIAL RESULTS	RUPEES IN LACS	
Gross Profit.	431.67	239.80
Interest & Bank Charges.	121.08	36.59
Administration & other–Selling expenses.	114.71	84.76
Net profit.	195.88	118.45
Donation paid to Rural Development Trust.	50.00	—
Profit before tax.	145.88	118.45

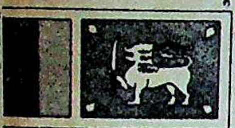
NOTE: THIS DOES NOT PURPORT TO BE A REPORT O THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL GENERA MEETING.

JINDA

□ , BDK-JSL-5

SRI LANKA

The Lost Tycoon



A UNIQUELY equipped US Orion surveillance plane from Diego Garcia, Soviet and Australian warships, Indonesian minesweepers and frogmen, Indian airplanes, Malaysian patrol boats and Sri Lankan fishermen all joined in the search for the missing millionaire and his brand new Learjet, which had vanished without trace with six passengers on board last month. The US State and Defence Departments, President Suharto's secretariat, the foreign office in Canberra, the Indian Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi and the Malaysian Premier Mahathir bin Mohamad had all answered urgent appeals from Colombo. It was as if a high level distress signal had been flashed to these capitals.

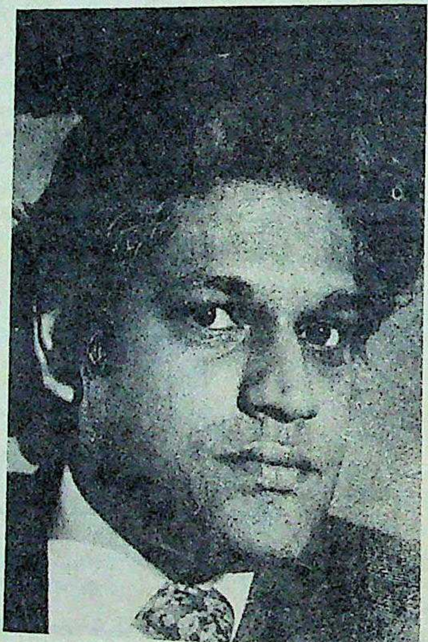
For on that plane which is believed to have crashed in the Malacca Straits was none other than Upali Wijewardene, least of whose claims to fame was that he was Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardene's cousin. Eight years ago he married former prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's niece. On the fateful day when the plane went off the radar screen 25 minutes after it left Kuala Lumpur last month, Bandaranaike phoned Mrs Gandhi for help, and her son Anura Bandaranaike, MP, cancelled his own birthday party.

But family connections, by birth and marriage, were not Upali's only assets. "Upali", says a close associate "worked behind a screen of trustees, lawyers, accountants, and inter-locking companies whose interests were spread across Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Britain, US and Australia." What happens to this empire now is anybody's guess.

Legendary Ancestors: Upali was educated at Royal College, Colombo, the nursery of the native elite, built by the far-sighted British, and then went up to Cambridge following the footsteps of his uncle, D.R. Wijewardene. The legendary D.R., as he was known, came back to Sri Lanka in the '20s determined to emulate the example of Lord Beaverbrook. Identifying himself with the burgeoning (constitutional) "Reform Movement" and carving for himself the role of spokesman and watchdog of the emerging national bourgeoisie, Wijewardene gave the British-owned *Times* more than a run for its money. By 1948, when Sri Lanka became independent, he was the proprietor of one of the biggest publishing enterprises in the region and the undisputed power-behind-the-throne.

Wijewardene gave his name, Richard, to his sister's son, Junius Richard now, Sri Lanka's all-powerful President. But Wijewardene's political patronage did not go to his nephew. It went to the Senanayake family, to D.S. Senanayake, the first premier and to his son, Dudley Senanayake, four times premier. A family dispute over property, it is said, was the cause of the alienation of the clans.

Family Favourite: This estrangement between the Wijewardenes and the Jayawardenes eventually brought Upali and Jayawardene closer, and because the President's son, Ravi, a pilot and sportsman, was indifferent to politics, Upali filled the breach.



Upali Wijewardene: becoming a legend

Upali was not gifted with Jayawardene's amazing patience and icy-cold brain, but he shared his cousin's dynamism and driving passion for power. Big business in Sri Lanka has traditionally been dominated by the British and expatriate Indians. Upali was a Sinhala-Buddhist, a native son. Hence, the genuine grief that swept the island at the news of the tragedy.

Ever since he walked out of a junior executive's job at Unilevers, warning his British boss that he would put on sale a cheaper soap and "crush Levers", Upali went from one business coup to another. It was not soap, though, which sent him on the road to his first million dollars before 30. It was chocolates. Kandos, a brand that captured the Singapore and Malaysian market, b him contacts with Hersheys and a s horses which Lester Piggott rides, a with a helipad, horses which run Epsom Derby and the Melbourne C Learjet, and companies around the Nothing seemed to remain—but poli

Perfect Qualifications: Addressin tarians, a Colombo editor once said: political science professor fed all the re te qualifications for a future president computer and asked for a name, it w come out Upali". The professor wou right, the computer wrong.

Young, rich, educated, and a lay cu dian of one of Sri Lanka's most sacred ples, Upali had an uncle as president of Senate and another who founded the C munist Party. And President Jayawarde cousin had chosen to marry Mrs Band naike's niece. He had the full backing of th extended family.

Yet, if he had a blazing talent for b ness, he had no taste for the business of p tics. First, there was his enormous eg help to a would-be man of the people. logo "U" is on every building, every U airplane, and on every minor employee's form. "That's the only 'U' in Upali's wrote a Colombo columnist, "the rest i 'I'." Next, he tried to introduce aggre marketing techniques into mass pol When he thought he would be nominat Kalawana, a remote rural seat, he Ogilvie and Mather to do a market su

Political Rejection: Finally, his lim self-confidence led him to signal his a tions to his rivals too early, sometimes verting friends and potential allies into mies. From Hong Kong to New York, h nounced to every reporter who intervi him that he wanted to be the "L Erhard of Sri Lanka". Just Chance How about President? Well, not as lo cousin Dicky is alive, would be the sol reply.

Business Asia put him on the cove *Fortune* featured him in all his advertised glory. But if *Fortune* smil him, the United National Party (U not. Prime Minister Premadasa, 56, a small coterie of comparatively young ters spotted a dangerous contender. Upali Now" was their common battle And he was stopped at every turn. He co not enter Parliament, not even the Working Committee.

Astrologers, Buddhist monks women in a trance or gazing into a c ball say Upali is not dead. Kids in Co play a new game called 'finding U plane'. Sri Lanka's best-selling succes has turned into tragedy and is now way to becoming a legend.

—MERVYN DE

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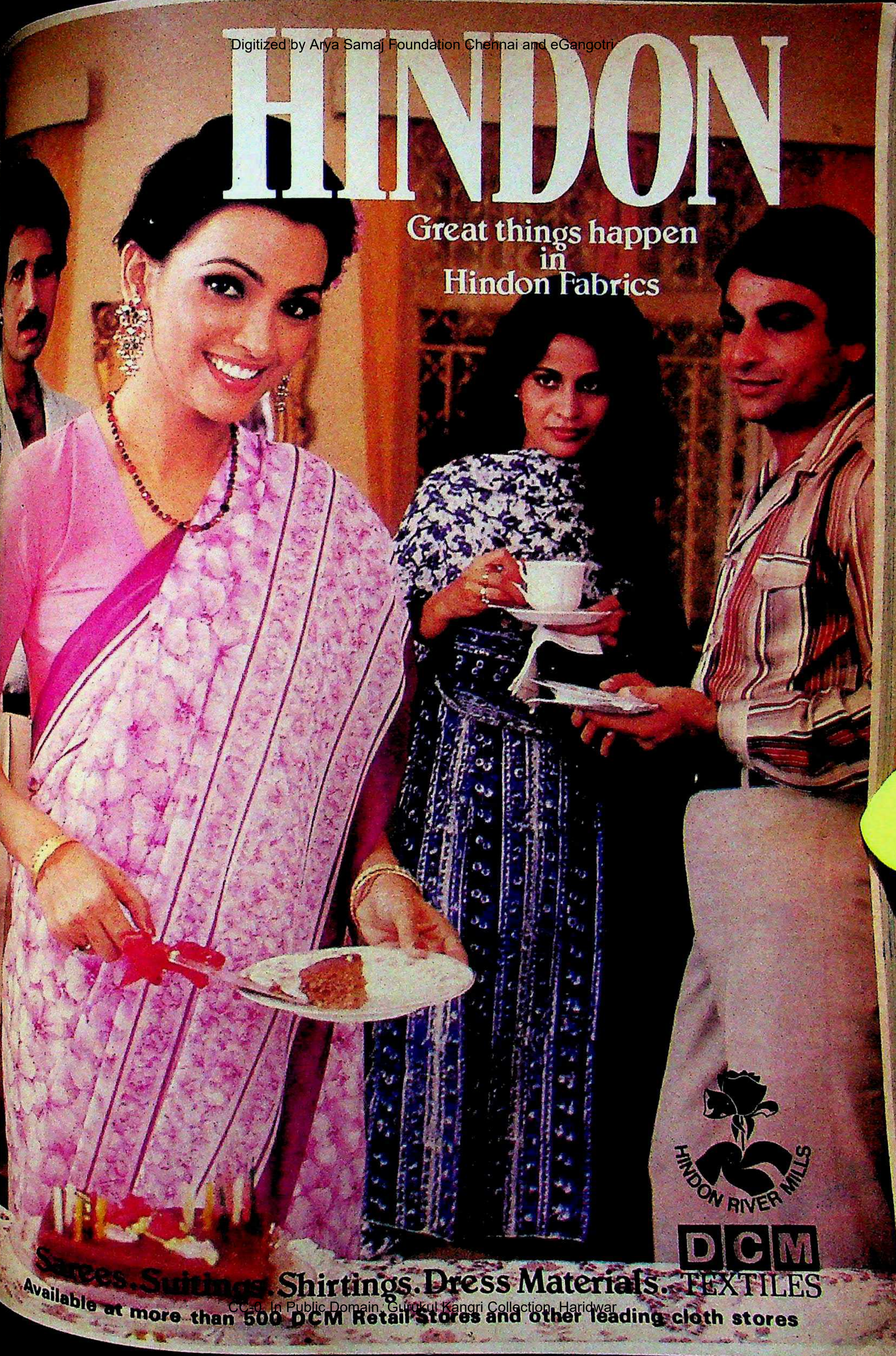
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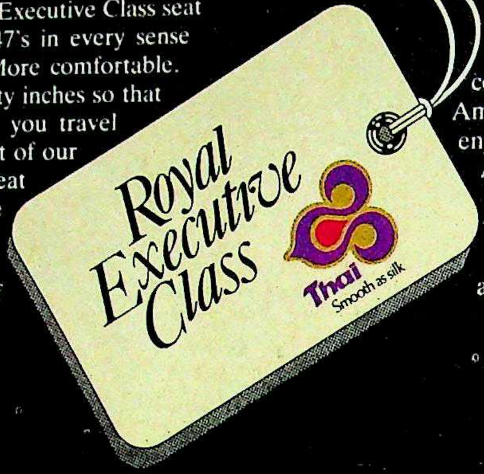
Thai brings a touch of luxury to the business of pleasure. Royal Executive Class. To create this new concept in business travel we started at the bottom — the seat. The Royal Executive Class seat is a First Class seat on our 747's in every sense of the word. Bigger. Wider. More comfortable. And now it reclines a full twenty inches so that you can feel the difference as you travel intercontinental. The food. Part of our exclusive service is serving great food in royal executive style. We go one better and give you a choice of menus. Other luxuries in the air include a selection of excellent wines and liqueurs, cheeseboards and baskets of tropical fruit. For your entertainment you can tune in to your kind of music. What's more, you can have all this for just the full economy fare, or a little extra on the intercontinental flights to Australia and America. Royal Executive Class can be enjoyed on board our 747 Jumbos and A 300 routes throughout the Orient. For the ultimate in Business Class, fly Thai's Royal Executive Class. It's got the right mix of business and pleasure.



Announcing the smooth as silk arrival of a top business class

OCEAN

hange Of Command

THERE will soon be more submarines infesting the waters of the Indian Ocean than sharks." The by a Swedish pacifist was prompted ent 'leak', regarding the proposed of American armed forces head m Stuttgart to High Wycombe near The plethora of denials issued by ericans only succeeded in attracting to a strategic plan which had until ped the scrutiny of the public eye— onal command structure of the an armed forces.

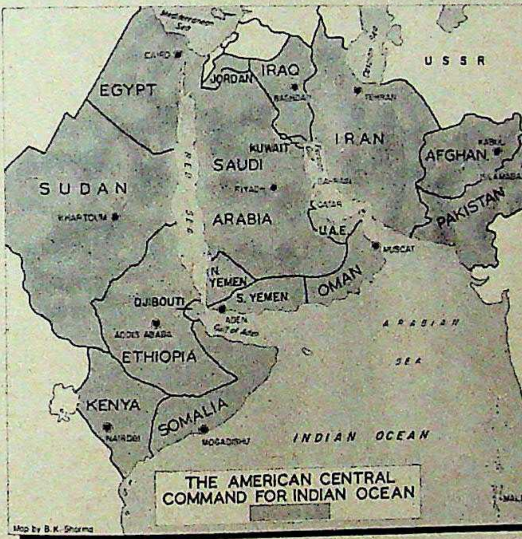
concept of collective Western armed der the aegis of Nato, has almost vershadowed the organisation of al American armed forces; atter merits equal attention its territorial jurisdiction not mbraces the trans-Atlantic but also takes in a sensitive the Indian Ocean within its reach.

ide Responsibility: The person eme command of Nato in —known as SACEUR (Supreme Commander Europe)—has been an American general; he o donned the mantle of the l commander-in-chief of the an armed forces in Europe as CINCEUR (Commander-in-Europe). His sphere of responsi- s Nato's supreme commander n confined to the Nato member —excluding France—and the ranean.

ever, as the commander-in-chief of n forces in Europe he had been res- e for the leadership of operations in a er geographical context stretching Europe and including the Mediterra- orth Africa, the entire Near East, the Peninsula, Iran and Pakistan. Inci- y, Pakistan is increasingly projecting a Middle East country, rather than of South Asia, in an attempt to ore its geographical, religious and l closeness to the rich Islamic coun- the Gulf.

The commander-in-chief of the US forces in Europe would have also sponsible for the leadership of the n forces, not only in the event of an conflict in Europe but also in the East, or in a confrontation by proxy n Afghanistan and Pakistan. Whether mmander-in-chief would provide or any other active military support stan in the event of the outbreak of hostilities against India remains unclear. From his desk in London, the commander-in-chief would also lead the operations of the American naval task force which has been stationed in the Indian Ocean permanently ever since the upheavals in Afghanistan and Iran, through a subordinate naval commander-in-chief called CINCUSNAVEUR (Commander-in-chief US Navy Europe).

New Component: All this has changed now. The vast geographical jurisdiction extending to almost half the world became the subject of heated debate within the Pentagon, which questioned the propriety of entrusting such a huge area to one single "desk", to use military jargon. Tensions inherent in the Middle East prompted Washington to add a sixth commander-in-chief to the existing five.



THE AMERICAN CENTRAL COMMAND FOR INDIAN OCEAN

Events in Afghanistan and Iran and the possibility, no matter how remote, of a spillover of hostilities to Pakistan often created friction between the commander-in-chief for the Pacific (CINCPAC) and the commander-in-chief for the Atlantic (CINCLANT), resulting from the line of demarcation between their areas of command which divided the Indian Ocean into two parts; this division was not questioned as long as the Americans did not maintain a permanent presence of their naval fleet in this part of the world.

The so-called Unified Commands embracing the five existing land, sea and air armed forces will now have a sixth component. The new Central Command (USCENTCOM) was born on January 1 this year. Its jurisdiction embraces the Middle East and includes Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, the Arab Peninsula including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, North and South Yemen and the bordering north-eastern African states of Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. However, Israel, Lebanon and Syria will continue to be part of the jurisdiction of the American commander-in-chief in Europe.

The seat of the new commander-in-chief will be the air force base at MacDill in Tampa, Florida, where the commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force has started to function with his staff. This swift action force, which was created in 1977, has had its own headquarters since March 1, 1980. Events in Iran, particularly the seizure of the American embassy staff in Teheran, accelerated its expansion and enhanced its significance which had not been realised till then.

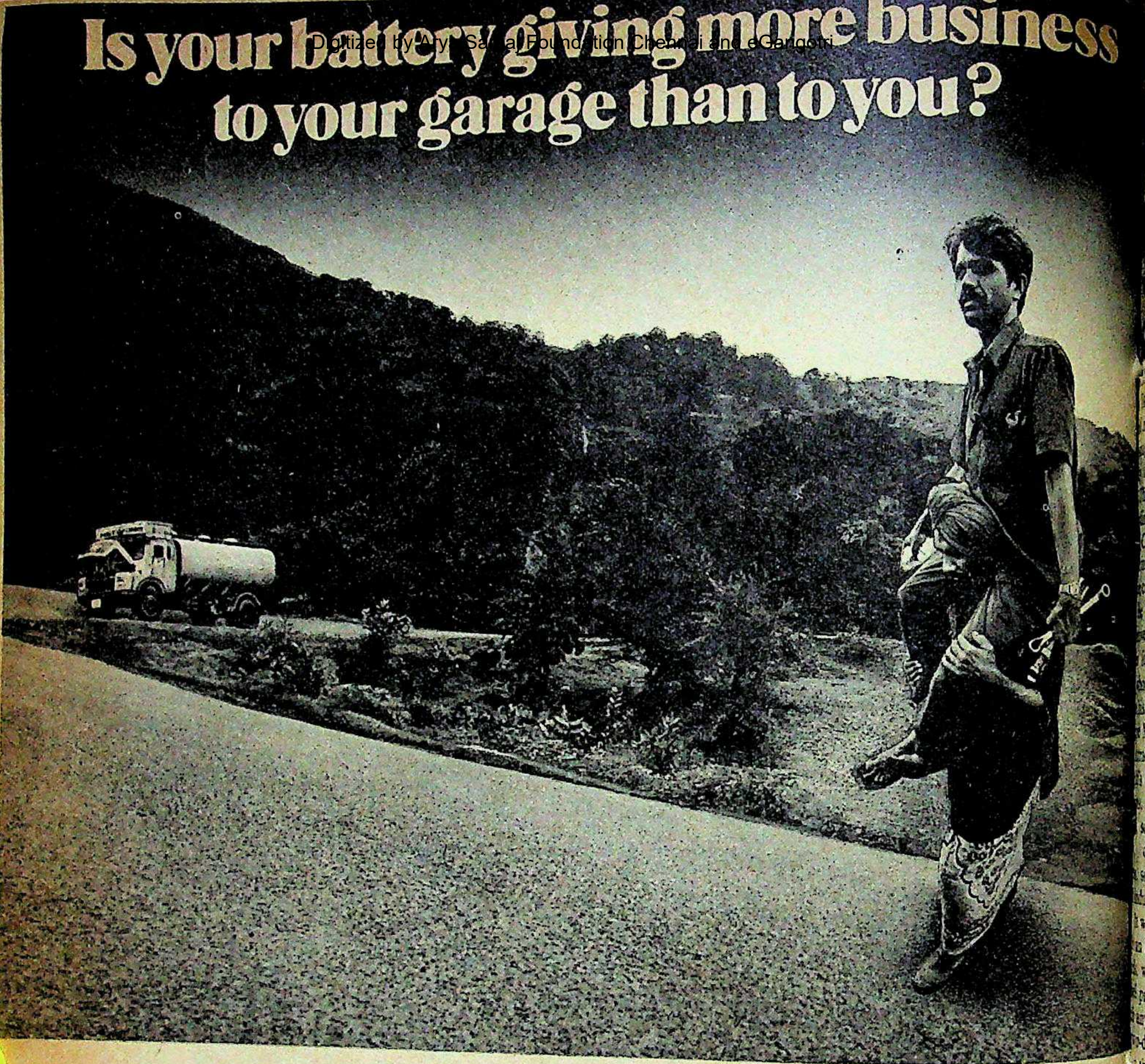
The key points in the jurisdiction of the USCENTCOM will be the Middle East, South-west Arabia and the Indian Ocean. The status of this command will be at par with the other five existing commands—Atlantic Command (LANTCOM), European Command (EUCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), Readiness Command (REDCOM) and Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) which is responsible for Latin America. The American command system thus stretches almost all over the world.

Vital Interests: The restructuring shows that the USA not only thinks in *political* global terms but also plans in *military* global terms. This also explains why Nato is amalgamated in this grouping, even though the alliance has an autonomous structure of its own. The national commander-in-chief assumes a more important role than the Nato commander-in-chief because all the atomic weapons which can be used by him, on the explicit orders of the American President himself, are national weapons. Nato does not have any atomic weapons of its own.

The Indian Ocean is of vital strategic interest to both the superpowers as witnessed by the American presence in Diego Garcia and the Soviet presence in Aden and Addis Ababa. The setting up of a special military machine by the Americans for exclusive use in the Indian Ocean region goes to prove how important this entire region has become for the West, which must safeguard the all-important oil shipment routes for its economy. In this context the new command, which has the role of a "fire extinguisher", could speedily despatch a task force to any area of conflict in this region to protect Western interests.

—MANIK MEHTA in Bonn

Is your battery giving more business to your garage than to you?



A bargain battery seems like a bargain only when it's bought. But soon after, it starts showing its true face . . . its reconditioned face.

With a reconditioned battery, your vehicle may soon require a push or hand-cranking to start. And a push start or hand-cranking can do damage. It will give jerks to the clutch, transmission rod and differential, and can damage them over time.

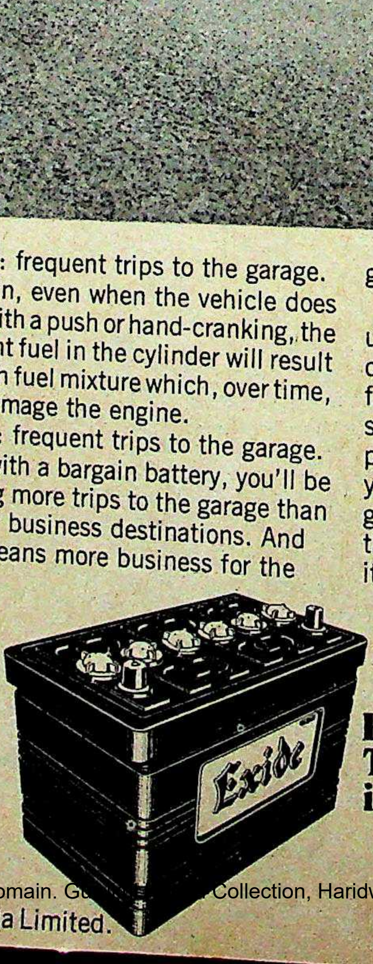
Result: frequent trips to the garage.

Again, even when the vehicle does start with a push or hand-cranking, the unburnt fuel in the cylinder will result in a rich fuel mixture which, over time, can damage the engine.

Result: frequent trips to the garage.

So with a bargain battery, you'll be making more trips to the garage than to your business destinations. And that means more business for the garage than for you.

And so you see, a bargain batte ultimately no bargain at all. Depe on Exide. The first name in batter for decades. For long life, instant start, minimum maintenance and protection of your vehicle. For keep your vehicle in business, not in the garage. In fact, Exide turns out to the best bargain in the long run. Wi its performance.



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in India.

A product of Chloride India Limited.

Rediffusion

FROM PARIS BY RAMESH CHANDRAN

Meeting Of Minds

"THIS gathering is even more extraordinary than the great Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture against Fascism in June 1935." So said the patriarchal professor of the Sorbonne, looking down at the chandeliered amphitheatre where a distinguished assembly was locked in debate. "This constellation of stars could have held its own against the best of IV's *Grand Siecle* of the 17th century when there were drama- Corneille, Racine and Moliere, writers like La Rochefou- La Fontaine, architects like Mansart, Perrault and Le Vau. e, how bereft the world's intellectual community would be the walls of the Sorbonne were to collapse around us!"

antiquarian professor could well indulge in hyperbole last fortnight's conference—"The Cultural Congress of Creation and Development"—sponsored by France's socialist ment, since it brought together some of the finest intellects continents under one roof to discuss how culture could allevi- world's economic crisis. Audaciously planned by France's rial and dynamic Mi- Culture, Jack Lang, seems to be outpacing illustrious predecessor, Malraux, the conferen- cted over 400 of the leading novelists, his- economists, philoso- scientists, actors, direc- dramatists, painters, sociologists, composers strialists.

was not surprising that illustrious congress of which included several prize winners, failed to any sort of consensus in -day meeting. But many that the creative genius might help postpone potential world-wide economic dis- As John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out, "Just as war is too to be left to generals, so is an economic crisis too impor- be left to the economists and the practical men." Sparks flew incandescence of some debates; but there seemed to be gene- ement that an economic crisis meant a cultural crisis. In this satellite technology, telecommunications and fibre optics, cul- was an industry. Therefore, economists, scientists and artists unite in common endeavour. The exaggerated idealisation of activities only succeeded in keeping it confined to a ghetto.

tellectual Giants: The discussions revolved around three "Creation and Economy"; "Creation and Social Change". Creation and International Relations". Jousting verbally with precision in these sessions were Nobel prize winners like Garcia Marquez, Wassily Leontieff and Ilya Prigogine, besi- er giants such as Norman Birnbaum, Elie Wiesel, Graham Giorgio Strehler and Umberto Eco; Wole Soyinka, Mary rthy, Alvin Toffler, Peter Ustinov and Arthur Penn; Vassili os, Miklos Jansco, Yachar Kemal, Norman Mailer and Peter Henri Atlan, Max Frisch, Ricardo Bofill, Paul Jenkins and Ford Coppola; Breyten Breytenbach, Sidney Lumet, Samuel Amos Oz and Alan Pakula; Robert Paxton, Volker Schlon- Francis, Kenzo Tenge and Jean Ziegler—and many more.

Besides the formidable foreigners, the *crème de la crème* of French intellectual society were strongly represented. Those present included Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Aron, Milan Kundera, Robert Bresson, Regis Debray, Jean Daniel, Vladimir Janklevitch, François Chatelet, Costa Gavras and Jean-Jacques Servan Schrieber. The Indian delegation comprised Raja Rao, Pupul Jayakar, Mrinal Sen and Kashinath Mahale, former rector of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Predictably some questions arose regarding the composition of the Indian team to which France's Cultural Ministry officials had prompt answers. Asked to elaborate on the ground rules followed in selecting the "intellectuals" and if some of the country's literary giants in the regional languages or artists of the stature of M.F. Husain were contacted, a spokesman said his ministry was unsparing in its efforts to contact "top-drawer Indian intellectuals" including Jnanpith award winners but some of them were simply not available: Offering just two instances, he said film maker Satyajit Ray was busy with his latest film while writer Amrita Pritam's "poor health" prevented her from attending. The spokesman felt India, with its four-member team was "strongly represented" while some countries—of Africa and Asia—were not invited at all. Besides, each of them were of "exceptional calibre" in their respective fields.

French Minister of Culture Jack Lang (top) and delegates at the Cultural Congress: distinguished conclave

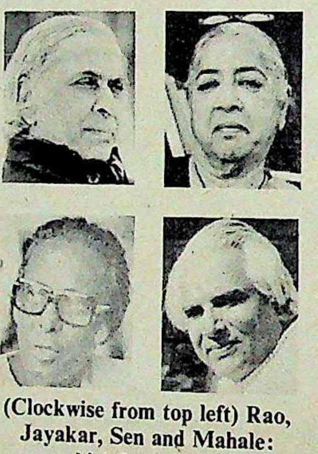
Elucidating, he added, while Rao and Sen needed no introduction Professor Mahale was the best-known Indian authority on French studies and Jayakar's contribution to the handicrafts industry was "outstanding". The spokesman emphasised that all the participants were invited at the personal behest of either Jack Lang or President Mitterrand himself.

The conference offered arguments which were often diffuse and abstract, but candid enough to allow that government-sponsored cultural institutions may be open to cultural misuse. Though the conference failed to produce a 'miracle cure', the fact that socialists and non-socialists, poets and economists, Arabs and Israelis, Turks and Greeks didn't hurl invectives at each other, but instead were united in purpose, was itself seen as 'stimulating'.

Speaking against the backdrop of the spectacular fresco by Puvis de Chavannes, the 18th-century French painter, that depicted the arts and sciences at the Sorbonne's amphitheatre, the congress provided many evocative vignettes: photographers rushing en masse to record the arrival of the seductive Sophia Loren hidden behind dark glasses—she listened attentively to the proceedings; actress Melina Mercouri, Greece's minister for culture, her fluorescent blonde hair flying, hugged and kissed by fellow socialists. There was intense curiosity about Adonis, one of the Arab world's great poets, and certainly about the most mysterious Egyptian film maker Youssef Chahine who had been threatened by the Muslim Brotherhood for his 1980 anti-racist film; Ernesto Cardenal—lugubrious and brooding—Nicaragua's minister for culture, but attending the conference as a first-rate poet in his right; Francis Ford Coppola—prosperous belly and all—braving journalistic flak despite the stunning box-office disaster of his latest film, *One From The Heart*.

Far-reaching Suggestions: Writer Susan Sontag, who just a year ago had caught New York's intellectual community by the scruff of its neck when she equated 'communism with fascism' at a rally in support of Poland's Solidarity trade union ("what else is Communism rather than fascism with a human face?" she had then asked amidst boos) which had provided chunks of material for the *Village Voice* and *The Nation*, this time chose to chastise the Reagan Administration for slashing the culture budget. Said Sontag: "We don't even have a minister for culture. If we did, it won't be someone like Mr Lang but more likely Clint Eastwood." Her compatriot, Kate Millet (*Sexual Politics*) was distressed yet again at what she saw as a "severe lack of representation" of women at the conference. The urbane William Styron (*Sophie's Choice*), who had earlier been seen posing elegantly beneath the statue of the 16th-century essayist Montaigne for photographers, said he believed an event like this could not be held anywhere else in this world except in Paris.

Leopold Senghor, poet and Senegal's former president, pointed out French schools should be taught about all that Africa has brought to the Occident, while Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Upper Volta's highly respected historian, said 90 per cent of the research on Africa is done outside Africa. French economist Jean-Pierre Faye, after reminding the audience that an economic crisis forced an entrepreneur called Honore de Balzac to quit his printing job and to become one of the world's most gifted writers, said the only way to overcome debilitating economic crises was with 'cultural projects'. Sean MacBride, Nobel prize winner for peace in 1974 and a one-time moving spirit behind Amnesty International, stood up to proclaim with redoubtable irony: "France is the only country which in a crisis had taken note of the importance of moral and cultural values. And, France also happened to be the third biggest arms exporter in the world"—remarks which drew thunderous applause. Graham Greene, lithe and straight-backed at 79, said efforts ought to be made to create an international fund for translating works of authors from the poorest nations and also of those who wrote in rare languages.



(Clockwise from top left) Rao, Jayakar, Sen and Mahale: high level team

JACK Lang, who had worked in tandem with Jacques Attali—an eclectic 39-year-old socialist intellectual who is one of President Mitterrand's closest advisors—in organising the conference, made sure that his alleged 'anti-American image' was kept deliberately low-key. Lang had gained considerable notoriety for his fiery speech at the World Cultural Conference organised by Unesco in Mexico last year. There, this outspoken minister had denounced "the multinational financial domineering system" and the "global kingdom of profits". No one needed to be explicitly told which was the "global kingdom" he was referring to. However, in Paris, although Lang kept his accents muted, several speakers repeatedly pointed to the "corrupting force of American programmes" and blasted its "cultural imperialism".

As the congress wound to an end, no one disputed that Lang's Paris conference was a superb triumph. But dictably, its coverage in the American media evoked insta versy. Several papers, quite unfairly, sidestepped the mo issues to which the conference had addressed itself and con solely on its alleged anti-American tenor.

Wrote George F. Will, a Reagan apologist and a con columnist for the *Washington Post*: "French taxpayers paid the Government incurred renting these intellectuals. Mr rand's policies are failing, so he wants to change the subject. posturing suits the timeless French vanity and today's French rity. Even after a decade of inflation, intellectuals come cheap *Wall Street Journal*—fiesty, with a brand-new European —wrote: "Instead of worrying about Dallas, Jack Lang spend his time worrying why France is a nullity in contem active world culture." Within days, the French press hit ba controlled venom.

Le Matin, an influential, socialist-oriented daily wrote: " produce cocoa and phosphates; we produce literature and ar Jack Lang was quoted in the paper as saying he was surprised "puerility of the newspaper of the New York bankers" distinguished French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladur menting on the *Journal* article said: "There you have a journal is simply ignorant. Let him do the rounds of the American sities and he will find out why France has standing in the area of social sciences."

Much of this quibbling was beyond the the congress. Perhaps more to the point question posed by the French newsma *L'Express*, a stern critic of the socialist G ment, which wondered why some of the French intellectuals like Raymond Aron, C Levi Strauss, Michel Foucault and Andre smann, all of whom are not noted for ex their admiration for the socialist regime, spicuously missing. But in the ultimate anal French Government drove home the po they were 'sensitive' and 'serious' towards

Rescuing Culture: That they are indeed is without doubt. All across Paris and Fran is now spearheading a mighty effort to wre re from the nearly exclusive patronage of th bourgeosie and open it up to all social class a gigantic $1.1 billion budget, Lang now has the financial and the ideas. New opera houses, art museums, cultural dance and jazz music schools are being erected. The ma street realised things had indeed changed, when suddenly one year he saw the revered Comédie Francaise troupe ena century classic plays in the subways.

French pop music and films are a special target for intervention. French pop is abysmal, its television worse; and can do anything if Gallic teenagers prefer Bruce Springstein Clash instead of French *Chanson* or Yves Montand. Undau minister for culture feels the lack of vigour and imagination because of lack of facilities—and he is going full steam change all that.

Except for the super-rich, nobody laments that the c destined to become a 'vast cultural worksite'. The wealthy cally recall the days before May 1981 when Paris used to orchestras and orchids, black ties and ball gowns, during June *Saison de Paris* and ask: Will the ambitious French volution work? The old professor looking benevolently glittering gathering in Paris last fortnight put it best: "This of lofty goal you normally associate with France. You ha of the world looking on, half with admiration, and half wi judgement."

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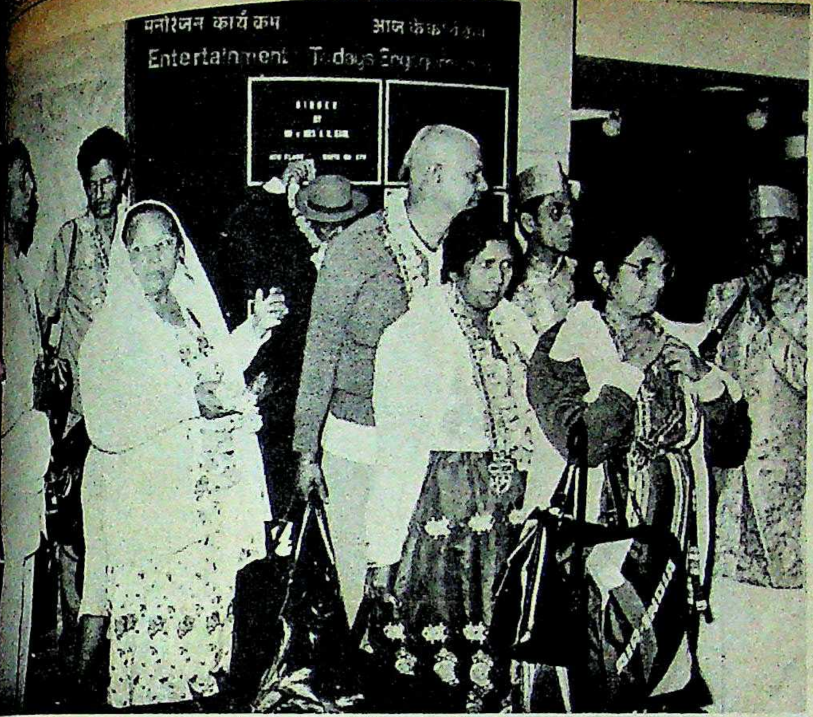


West Indian visitors in Delhi: searching for roots

GRANTS

entimental Journey

WAS a home-coming in every sense of word. Last fortnight, 260 West In- ans of Indian origin from the islands of dad and Tobago were in India in search roots in a hazily remembered home- Escorting them on their 26-day me- trip, aptly billed a "journey to the ", was a Delhi-based travel agency y. Most of the West Indians are generation descendants of the Indian ers who, over a century ago, were ped to the West Indies to work on plant- s. Those who finally met their kin were ; said Roma Boodoo Singh who led to Barigaon in Azamgarh district the rest of her family to meet their relatives: "I can hardly believe it's ing to us."

The Singhs had been waiting for ion for a long time. Said Rajpaul Singh, 57, a geological draughtsman dad: "All we had to go on was an scrawled on the back of an airmail pe from relatives staying in Azamgarh of Uttar Pradesh with whom we had corresponding for ages."

Moving Reunion: In Varanasi, the tearfully greeted Prahlad and ar, two young men who had been sent Boodoo Singh's father-in-law's 80-year- ther Amaldhary Singh to escort them Barigaon village where they spent a long night reminiscing. Boodoo Singh would like to return to India and settle down but is not sure whether "at this age I will be able to readjust to a new cultural environment". Confided a smiling Roma: "I will certainly be back despite the few disappointments I have had which may be because we have been looking for similarities."

The reunion easily brought back those moments more than a century ago when ships set out for the West Indies with human cargoes. One of them was the Fatel Razaaq which set sail from Calcutta on February 23, 1845 with 213 men and women huddled on board. The terms of agreement stipulated that they would work for an initial five years on the *Burra* Sahibs' cane plantations, nine hours a day, at a prefixed wage of one shilling and a half-penny a day, the equivalent of 12 annas and six pice in those days.

Says Odyssey Managing Director Yusuf Hussain: "Over the years till 1917, when the last of the steamboats left Calcutta port, at least 145,000 such *Jahazi Bhais* (shipmates), as they came to be called, must have been shipped out by press gangs, and few of them were ever allowed to return." Giving in to the inevitable, the labourers toiled on until they finally decided to settle down in the islands.

Emotional Ties: But the memory of the homeland was passed down from generation to generation, and brought them to India. Says Ram Jattan Jaglal, the Trinidadian group leader: "Even now, almost a century and a half later, our emotional affinities have remained intact and there is a sense of belonging when we think of India. It still is first home for both of us." And yet a home-coming can be traumatic, as Jaglal knows only too well. He was here earlier in 1977 and spent quite some time in Madras trying to trace his family links. He failed; now, he doesn't want to talk about it.

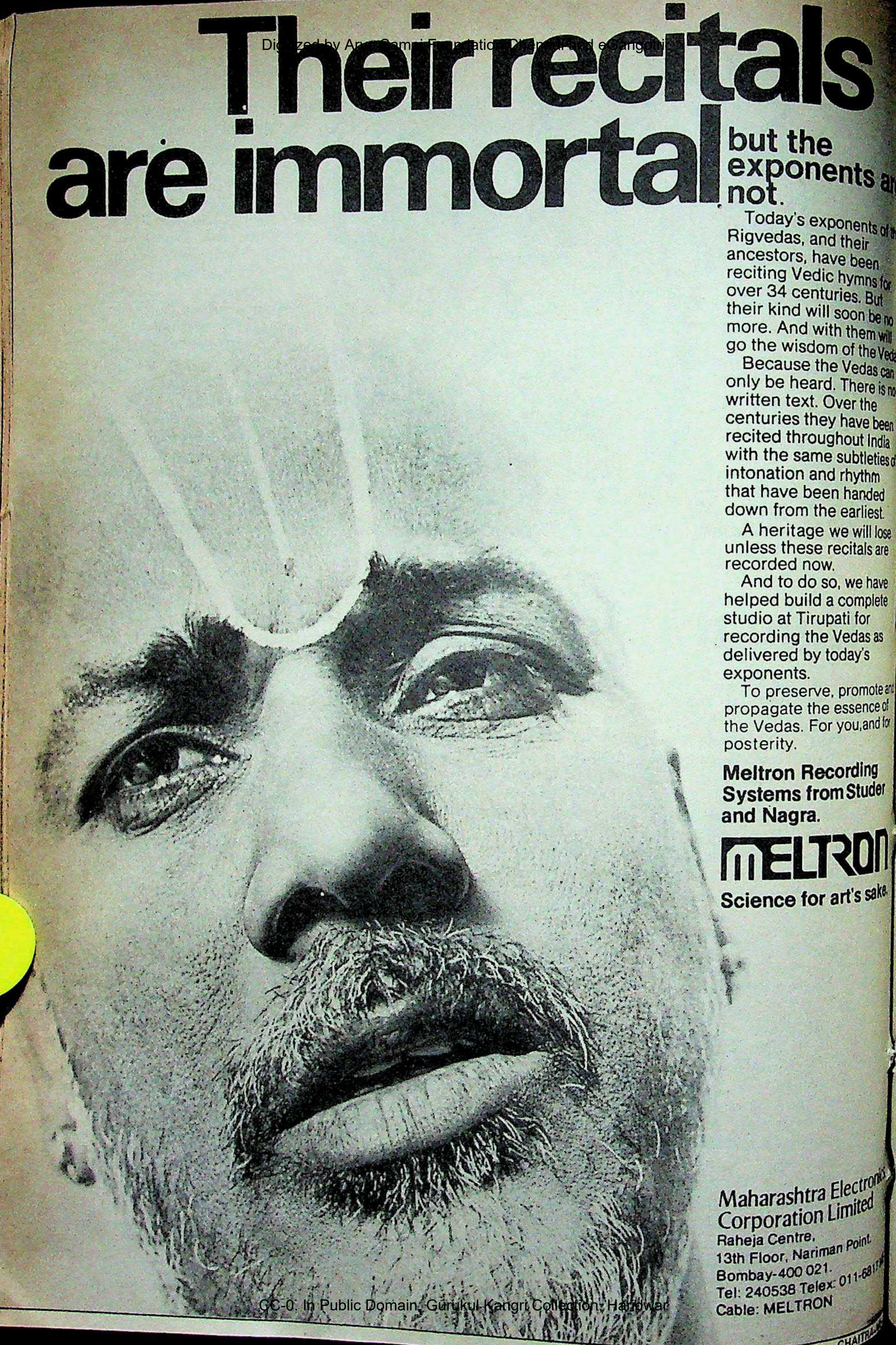
Among the group is Pandit Basdeo Peareylal, who can speak both Hindi and Sanskrit, and believes he is the reincarnation of his great-grandfather Manohar Tiwari. Peareylal says Tiwari had gone to Trinidad with his two sons in 1881 on board the sailing ship Lee but had returned to Dholpur in Rajasthan. Now Peareylal is trying his best to locate his surviving relatives in Dholpur. He has found his ancestral home of which only a crumbling boundary wall, a brick wall and an old well remains.

However, the *chutiadhary* (pig-tailed) Peareylal says that he will stay back for a month in India to hunt for his roots. "In Trinidad," he points out, "we have a mini-India. We have the same brass bells in our temples, the chanting of Vedic hymns, readings from the Ramayana and the idols of Hindu gods."

Similarities: Peareylal affirms haltingly in Hindi: "What is more, our life-style hasn't really changed all that much. We cook more or less the same food—maybe not so spicy. We follow many of the same rituals and quite a few of us remember the nanny tales, the Hindi alphabet and the Awadhi dialect as spoken in eastern Uttar Pradesh—which at first might sound only a little anglicised now." Which is saying a lot given that in Trinidad nearly 45 per cent of the population, which makes slightly over a million, is of Indian origin.

However, Errol Jaglal, 20, an electronics student studying in New York feels that, for the new generation, such cultural links and especially religious bonds are weakening, owing to western influences. Says the jean-clad Errol: "I came here expecting to see a more modernized country but the poverty visible on the streets is depressing." Nazreen, 17, the baby of the group, who dropped out of school and is now managing her father's furnishing business said simply: "I came with my sister because I wanted to and I am happy. We no longer remember where we came from in India but that we came from here is all that is important." And Roma expresses the feelings of most members of the group when she says: "All I would like to say is *au revoir* and not farewell for I want to keep coming back."

—ANAND SAGAR



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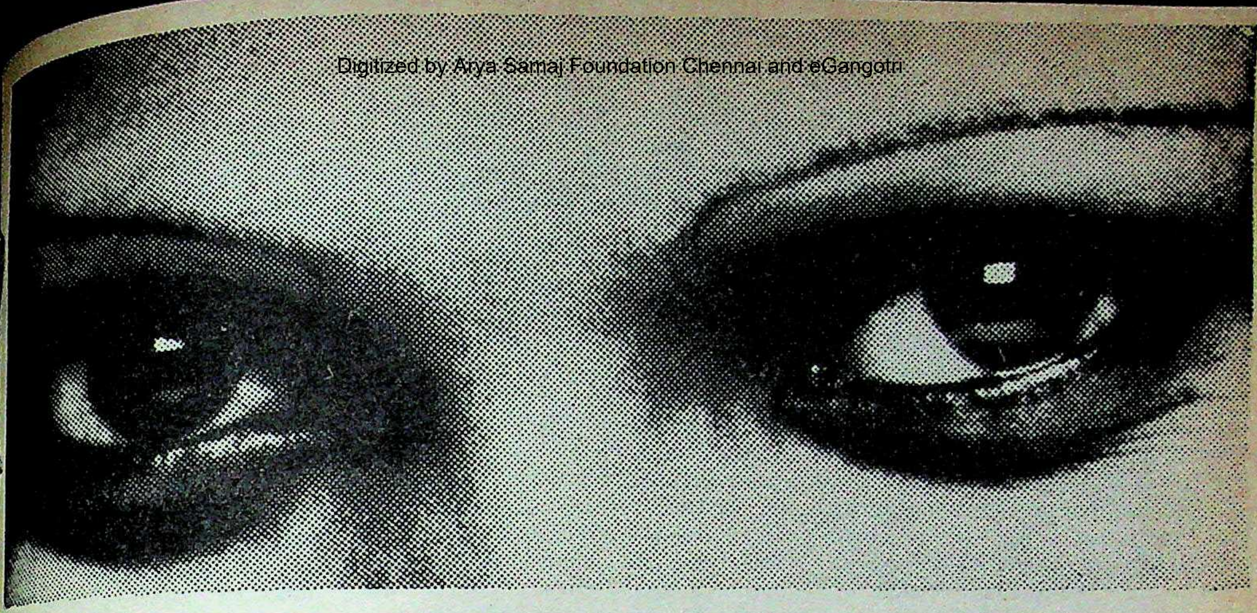

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SUPREME COURT

Uneasy On The Bench

IT WAS the anticlimax of the fortnight. The backdrop was provided by a pithy speech, raising both hopes and hackles, by Y.V. Chandrachud, chief justice of India. For a moment it looked as though the arbitrary system of hiring judges for the Supreme Court was in for a thorough overhaul. But such hopes proved illusory when the Union Law Ministry, after a few days, announced four new appointments to the Supreme Court Bench. The selection merely dittoed the established convention without so much as changing a comma.

The four judges are: D.P. Madon, chief justice of Bombay High Court; Sabyasachi Mukherjee, acting chief justice of Calcutta High Court; M.P. Thakkar, chief justice of Gujarat High Court; and Ranganath Mishra, chief justice of Orissa High Court. The new lot of top judicial appointments came as no surprise. But the catch lay in the summary manner in which Chandrachud's pleadings for taking the appointments out of the clutches of the Government were ignored.

Proposed Collegium: A week before the appointments were announced, Chandrachud had given an unusually forthright speech at the inauguration of the two-day all-India law seminar on the theme of 'Erosion of the Judiciary' at Patna. Speaking at the seminar, he advocated the institution of a nine-member collegium to appoint all Supreme Court and high court judges, consisting of three members from the bench, two from the bar and two each from the Government and opposition parties.

The seminar was organised by the Bar Council of India, an elective body of advocates, which had passed a resolution in 1980 to the same effect. Chandrachud's opinion was merely an extension of the longstanding demand of a section of the bench as well as the bar to dilute the Government's clout in judicial appointments. However, even the Bar Council did not go into the arithmetic of the collegium's composition when it passed the resolution earlier.

Chandrachud only spelt it out clearly, implying that the bench-and-bar bloc in the proposed collegium could always carry the day by a majority of five to four. And, even when the decision was not unanimous, the bloc could always bank on the Opposition's support, thus making the odds disturbingly even for the ruling party. "If the Chief Justice of India has his way", said a Bar Council spokesman, "the Government no longer signs the cheque while selecting judges."

Consultation: The Government has pricked the bubble of the judiciary's new hope without hesitation. The four Supreme Court appointments, which leave only one vacancy unfilled on the country's highest bench, were rushed through without much ado. The Chief Justice of India was caught on the wrong foot as the Law Ministry clearly stated that the appointments were decided upon only after a lengthy constitutional drill, in which Chandrachud had not only been "consulted", but had also given his "consent".

Commenting on the induction of the four judges, a Union Law Ministry source said: "Under the existing provisions of the Constitution, the selection of judges must be preceded by effective consultation with the Chief Justice of India. Consultation does not necessarily mean concurrence. But there was no difference of opinion between the executive and the Chief Justice of India over the latest appointments."

Chandrachud: outmanoeuvred

This gave the lie to a suspicion, voiced in hushed anxiety for some time in judicial circles, that Chandrachud had in fact dug in his feet and was not willing to let the executive have its way. What fuelled the suspicion was the unusual delay in filling the vacancies, two of which had existed for three years. The question is: if Chandrachud was so keen on the collegium, why did he okay (as claimed by the government spokesman) the appointments? Or, did he really give his consent to all the four appointments?

His office maintained its customary silence on the question; nor did it contradict the presidential announcement, which unambiguously stated that the appointments were made "on the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India". The "pro-collegium" judges were fuming inwardly. Said one of them: "By not insisting on the Government to lay off its hand in selecting judges, the Chief Justice of India has allowed a gilt-edged opportunity to be frittered away."

Under Article 124 of the Constitution, the President (meaning, the executive) may consult the Chief Justice of India as well as another judge, before appointing a new judge to the bench. But the Centre did not create a precedent in the recent cases by consulting any other judge, such as Justice P.N. Bhagwati, the second seniormost member of the Supreme Court Bench. Iro it is Bhagwati who, in the Judges' Tr Case (INDIA TODAY, January 15, 198 ruled that the executive should have t word in selecting judges.

Sinister Move: However, the fo pointments assumed greater significa they were destined to trigger a chain re of changes down the line. The immedia was filling the vacancies created b elevation to the Supreme Court. The C last fortnight took a definite stand on matter. The Law Ministry spokesman "It is certain that the four high cou Bombay, Gujarat, Calcutta and Orissa now have chief justices from other sta

This was in step with a policy de announced earlier by Union Law Mi Jagannath Kaushal, that all new app ments to the chair of chief justice will be fr outside states. A large section of the suspects that this is a sinister move to co the judiciary: sending the amenable j to easy state capitals, and the difficult j to remote places. Said Ranjit Mahan sident of the Bar Council of India: " move is not scuttled now, all upright j will end up being transferred to re corners of the country or places far from their homes."

Even some of the Supreme Court j read these writings on the wall. Justice V Tulzapurkar of the Supreme Court there was no indication available that sonal difficulties of judges and chief j involved in the proposed transfers" wo taken into consideration.

Likely Confrontation: While the pointment of outside judges as chief j looked like a near-at-hand possibil Law Ministry also stuck to its decision "at least a third of the bench" of each court with judges drawn from other st new guideline formulated by the C said that only those chief justices or j who had one year or less to go b retirement would not be transferred to high courts. At a conference of chief j in Delhi, a resolution req Chandrachud to meet the prime minist request her "not to disturb the justices".

The Centre is hesitant to strike wi assessing the depth of the judges' resent against being bulldozed by the execu it drags its feet, the number of vaca high courts piles up: it now stands alarming 84. Its inevitable conco 64,000 cases pending before the Su Court alone. True, the Government ca postpone a decision any longer but th of appointments and transfers ca follow in the coming months also bitter and protracted struggle bet men in black robes and those in wh

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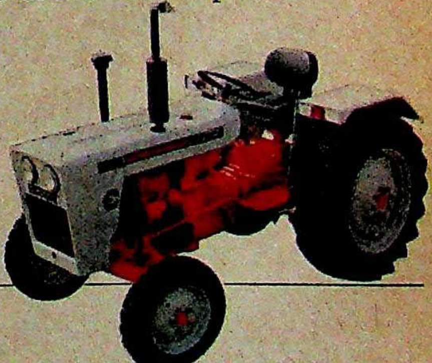

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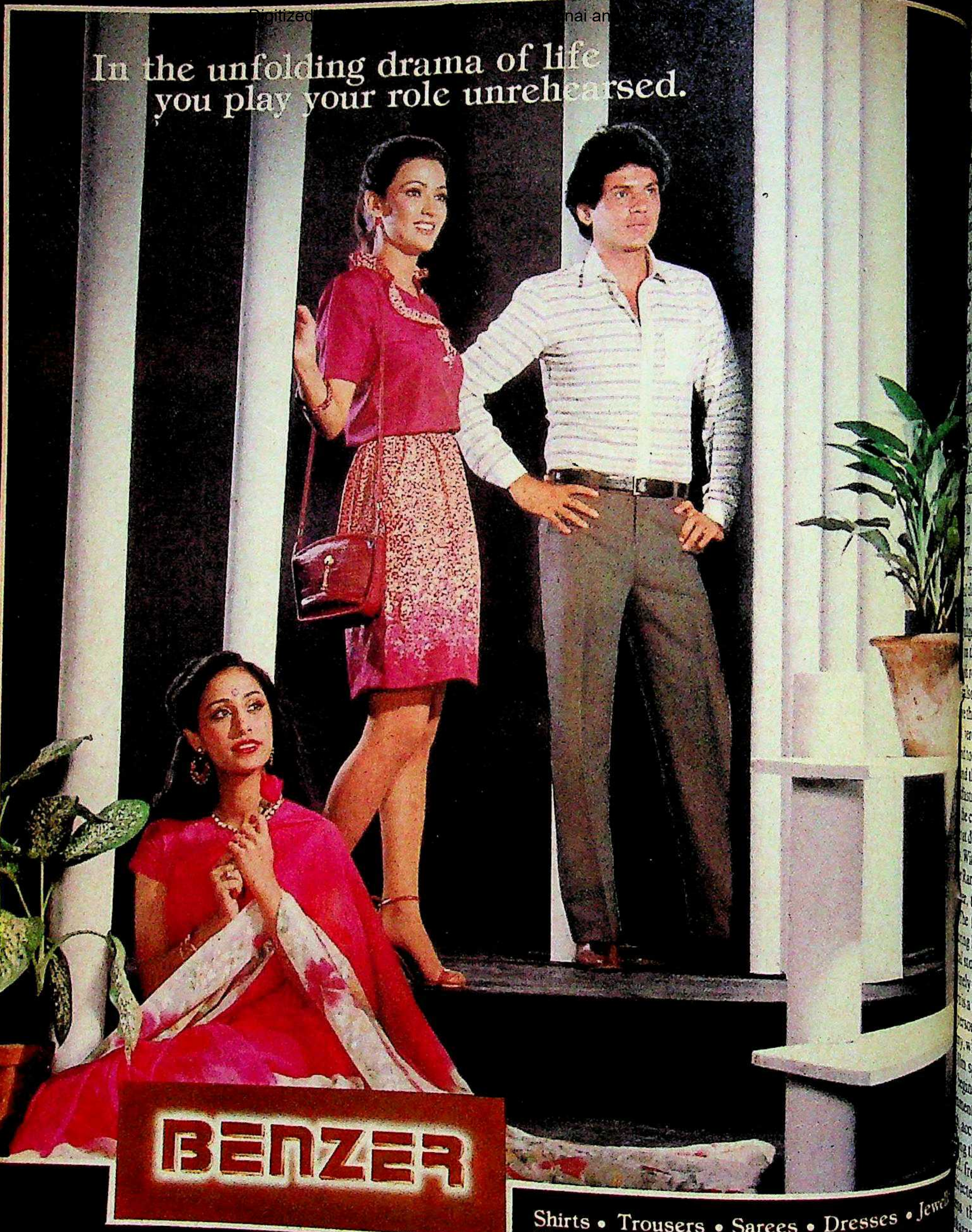
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SHIP

creen Battle

ERY revolutionary film producer complains about the censor board rowing spokes into his wheel. But film makers have taken their bat- the censors to court. Now the krishna Cine Studios, Hyderabad, ve produced one of Andhra Pradesh Minister N. T. Rama Rao's most Telugu films, *Sreemadvirat Veera- dra Swamy Charitra*, seem deter- to make a judicial issue of their fight censor board, and take the matter to mate legal conclusion.

an unprecedented ruling, last month, judge, Justice S. Padmanabhan of ras High Court directed the Cen- rd of Film Censors to furnish rea- the producer for its ordering 10 *Sreemadvirat Veerabrahmendra Charitra* in a month's time. Far vealing the reasons, which the aims are confidential, the censors filed a writ appeal challenging e's ruling. They have asked for a the court's order that they should reasons on their cuts. The produ- so gearing up to continue the fight the appellate bench. Whatever the rdict of the court, the case is to create legal history. Meanwhile, the legal ambit of the matter, the ness of the battle the producer censor board seem to be waging deep political motivation of both With the actor, director, and pro- Rama Rao having now become chief , the stakes are rather high.

film, like almost all the others Rama Rao, deals with a mytho- story, the futuristic predictions of ly endowed saint Brahmam Garu is a word of respect used in referring to son in Telugu) or Veerabrahmendra , who lived nearly three centuries ago. spans the period from the time the gins life with his foster parents to his nt of the so-called 'jeevasamadhi', according to Hindu tradition, implies the physical body but keeping alive free from rebirth. Rama Rao, who cted the film himself, features in it in than five roles: sage Ramanuja, aracharya, Lord Buddha, Yogi Vema- d Sreemadvirat Veerabrahmendra

tiny: The film, which cost about Rs , was completed in May 1982, and examination to the Central Board of ensors for grant of what is technically as a censor certificate, authorising unrestricted public exhibition. The film was scrutinised by the examining and revising committees, and the board consequently directed 10 cuts to be carried out for it to be certified. If the producer felt that the scenes which were cut needed to be retained, he had to give an explanation to the board.

Ramakrishna Cine Studios turned the argument round. It wanted to know the reasons of every individual member of the board for ordering deletion of the shots in question for it to explain why it deemed them necessary to be retained. But according to the board "the reports of the members of the committees are confidential and cannot, therefore, be disclosed to the producer. That is the usual practice, sanctified by custom and usage".

Rama Rao as Brahmam Garu: controversial cuts

The producer subsequently filed the writ petition for quashing the board's orders, stating that the board was not entitled to claim the privilege of confidentiality under any law, and that the censors sought to curb the fundamental rights of the producer to freedom of speech and expression. The studio won the first round, but the stage is now set for the appellate battle whose outcome is being awaited eagerly by producers, directors, actors and the public alike.

Objections: One of the scenes recommended for censorship shows Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran and American President Ronald Reagan. The justification for their presence is that Veerabrahmendra Swamy had the gift of prophecy and could foretell the rise of matinee idols. Says veteran film producer V. Visweswara Rao: "The censor board has objected to these shots under guideline 2(4) of censorship framed under the Cinematograph Act, and this guideline, incidentally, deals with obscenity, vulgarity and depravity."

Another disputed scene features a nude lady, who presents herself before Yogi to seduce him. According to N. Balakrishna, "Anything less than a nude lady would have been insufficient to jolt Vemana into realising the limited and transient nature of bodily pleasures." "Why should the censor board consider nudity to be obscene or vulgar?" inquires Visweswara Rao.

A spokesman of the Central Board of Film Censors expressed surprise that the Ramakrishna Cine Studios was making an issue of the present case. "We have ordered only a very few cuts in this film, compared to the endless series of cuts we direct in many other films. There can be difference of opinion on the merit of the cuts, but the producer need not have gone to court, and come to us instead for a dialogue. We normally have these informal dialogue with producers, and explain to them our objections to certain shots or scenes. Even when we issue written orders directing certain cuts, we mention the code numbers of the specific guidelines framed under the Cinematograph Act under which the deletions are being ordered. These code numbers are universally familiar to seasoned producers, and any producer must be able to infer the board's objections to the shots in question from them," the spokesman observed.

"Disclosing to film producers the reasons why individual members of the examining and revising committees of the censor board seek deletions of certain shots may make these committee members vulnerable to pulls and pressures from the industry," the official added, discussing the broader issues involved in creating a new open-book precedent, without particular relevance to the immediate case.

With both sides levelling charges of political motivation at each other, and with the Central Government being reportedly aware of the matter at the highest level, informed observers do not rule out amendments to the rules framed under the Cinematograph Act specifying as strictly confidential the opinions of individual members of the censor board panels. The problem is that, with no such guarantee of confidentiality, it is very unlikely that anyone will be willing to come forward and serve on these panels.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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SQUEEZE ON PROFITS

A NUMBER of the country's best known companies could be hit very badly by the new tax disallowance on expenditure on advertising, travelling and hotel expenditure. Richardson Hindustan's net profits will drop by 35 per cent and its effective tax rate rise from 70 to 81 per cent. ITC spent Rs 4.2 crore last year on advertising and travelling, and could therefore find its total tax burden rising by close to Rs 1 crore per year. The worst hit will be companies who advertise heavily in relation to their turnover: and these include units producing soft drinks, cosmetics and consumer durables. Parle, for instance, spends around 15 per cent of its total revenue on advertising and could now find its profit margins severely squeezed. Companies in these fields are debating two options: slash expenditure or hike prices to pass the burden to the customer.

BLINGS IN THE RANKS

ITANNIA Industries is going through a shake-up at the top, ith the company chairman as well as its managing director out to leave the board. Four new directors were appointed following changes in Britannia's foreign ownership. and Palmer Foods, the British firm which owns 40 per cent nia shares, was recently bought up by the American Brands, which has decided to take active control of the y's operations.

nnia shares, meanwhile, have been more than usually the stock market, with 6 to 7 per cent of the company's total ving been bought in recent weeks by a Bombay textile y and an expatriate Indian who has business links with Britannia, already in a strong position because of large cash s and the permission obtained recently to go ahead with an s soyabean project in Madhya Pradesh, is expected head with an aggressive corporate drive in the com- ths.

LY AMENDMENT

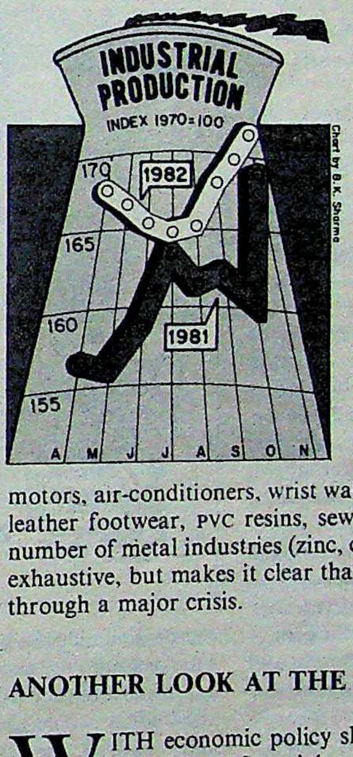
E AMERICAN magazine *Time* has finally won its tax battle with the Government of India—not in court, where the matter y, but through a change in the tax law. Backing away quietly earlier stand that *Time*'s operations in India were taxable A TODAY, July 31, 1982), the Government has proposed a in the income tax law exempting non-resident businesses d only in the "collection of news and views in India for sion out of India". The amendment, introduced as part of nce Bill, takes retrospective effect from 1962, when the e Tax Act came into force. *Time* thus wins its battle without to pursue its case in court.

CAN SAFARI

E MODIS are about to clinch a deal for acquiring control of tyre company in Ghana. This is preparatory to a drive that ill be launched soon to take charge of tyre companies in er African countries. All the concerned tyre companies in are at present run by Firestone of the US, whose Indian y was handed over to the Modis two years ago.

estone is reportedly happy with the Modis' handling of the mpany, now known as Bombay Tyres International, and is o let the Modis handle some of their African operations as a switch-over entails the permission of the governments of tries involved, and Ghana is expected to give its consent in r future. If the experiment in that country works out well, her African governments are expected to follow suit.

MANUFACTURING FALL



INDUSTRIALISTS seem to have been doing no more than speaking the truth while complaining about recession, as official figures themselves now reveal. The *Economic Survey* shows that the industrial production index has been going up primarily because of a good performance by the mining and quarrying sub-sector and because of greater electricity generation. In the crucial manufacturing sub-sector, however, the performance has been indifferent: a growth of 2.7 per cent in the first seven months of 1982–83.

More importantly, almost half the manufacturing industries registered an absolute fall in production, and the list is devastating in its sweep: steel, cotton cloth, jute, commercial vehicles, railway wagons, tractors, scooter tyres, soda ash, caustic soda, viscose filament yarn, viscose staple fibre, viscose tyre cord, bicycles, diesel engines, electric motors, air-conditioners, wrist watches, paper and pulp machinery, leather footwear, PVC resins, sewing machines, hand tools and a number of metal industries (zinc, copper, lead). This list is far from exhaustive, but makes it clear that half of Indian industry is going through a major crisis.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE IMF

WITH economic policy shifting back to the middle of the road, some influential economists—including a member of the newly formed advisory council of economists—have suggested a second look at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan programme. With the rate of fall in foreign exchange reserves having halved, from Rs 193 crore per month last year to Rs 91 crore per month this year (till January), the argument being put forward is that a trimming of imports and avoidance of further external borrowings can help overcome the foreign exchange crisis.

The Govermnent has already realised that the alternative policy of liberalised imports and an export thrust will not yield the hoped for results, and that it may instead lead only to unmanageable debt servicing burdens. The course of action now suggested seeks to make official economic policy even more cautious by forgoing the Rs 2,400 crore still available from the IMF. The Government is still to take a final decision, but is likely to go ahead with negotiating the performance criteria for the remaining part of the loan.

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THE BUDGET

A Runaway Economy

A DAY after Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee presented his budget in Parliament, some officials from his ministry had their usual yearly encounter with the press. Normally, the officials have their figures ready, worked out to the last decimal point; but this time they were rather cagey. They said their routine stuff—the budget is good for savings and investment; it should stimulate production and exports, and so on and so forth—but it was obvious their heart was not in it.

A leading question during this encounter was about prices:

"How will it affect prices?" asked a reporter.

"We don't know."

"You mean you have not done your calculations?"

"We have, but we would rather not give any specific figure."

What the budget boys were actually saying (though not in so many words) was that they hadn't the faintest idea which way the cat would jump. They simply did not know how the prices would move; they didn't know how industrial production would move; they didn't know how company profits would behave. The budget exercise was just a shot in the dark; and the finance minister's peroration in Parliament about how wonderful things were going to be was plain, idle rhetoric.

You might think that such colossal ignorance about cause and effect has serious implications for the economy, and you may be right. But the fact remains that the economy has taken off and gone into *nirvana* and neither the finance minister nor anyone else can do anything about it. He may press a button here and pull a chord there, but the economy goes its own way. After 30 years of planning, we have indeed achieved a self-sustaining economy, though that is not how the planners understood the term.

Fine Tuning: You cannot really blame the finance minister for not doing what he cannot do. He has now done the next best thing: he has tried to fine-tune an economy that is more or less beyond his control, in the hope that it will stay on course, even if that course is of its own seeking and not that of the planners.

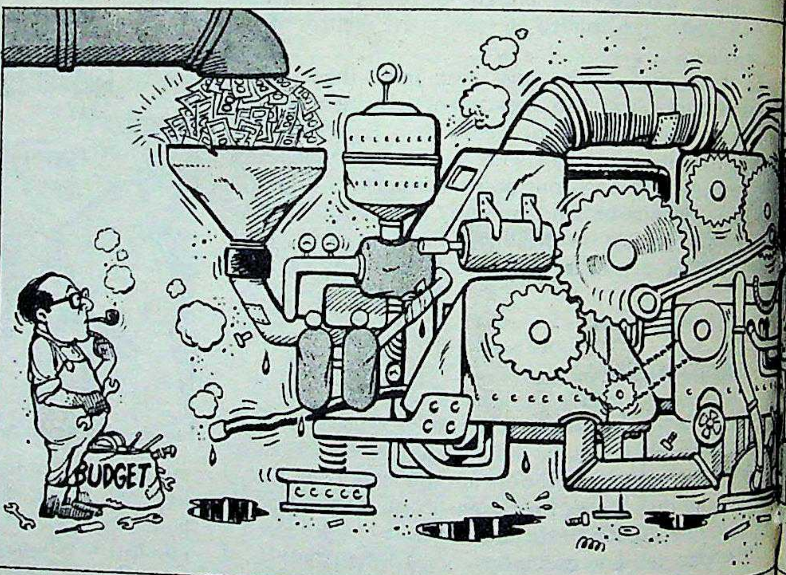
The budget is no longer an instrument of economic and social change, which it may have been in the early stages of planning. Pranab Mukherjee can chop a bit here and add a bit there but that will not make much of a difference to the overall balance of economic forces. The lowering of corporate tax rate from, say, 65 to 60 per cent might make headlines in the press and the stockbrokers might throw their caps in the air; but the organised sector in this country is a very small part of the national economy, and though this sector does well when the economy as a whole does well, the converse is not always true.

Most of us who work in this organised sector and look for our bread and butter there are far too obsessed with the tail to worry about the dog. And as long as the farm sector is outside the purview of the budget—but for some concessions in respect of fertiliser prices and such titbits—there is very little the budget can do about the dog. In advanced countries, the farm sector accounts for no more than 5 to 7 per cent of the national economy and is fully incorporated with it. In such countries, a deficit or a surplus budget can really turn the economy round. In India, its effect can at best be marginal.

It is also not true that taxation alone determines the level and tempo of business activity. Businessmen do not work hard when taxes are low and go easy when they are high. Taxation has been consistently on the rise over the years, and so is overall business activity. But high taxes over a long period do have a dampening effect.

Government Spending: What this Government lacks is not economic wisdom but political will. It is generally agreed that the Government takes away far to slice of the gross national product will disburse next year a sum appro 35,000 crore (out of a GNP of Rs crore, or nearly 25 per cent) which whole of our GNP barely 13 years ag

Had the finance minister got up liament and said that the Governm drawn up a plan to cut down governm penditure by even as little as 1 per cen (just Rs 350 crore, or less than Rs 1 day) over the next 10 years, that wo been something. Assuming that grows by 5 per cent a year in money te an extremely conservative estim



would bring down the proportion of ment expenditure to 15 per cent of years, a moderate figure that wo matically correct many of the im built into the economy as a result of and continuous state spending.

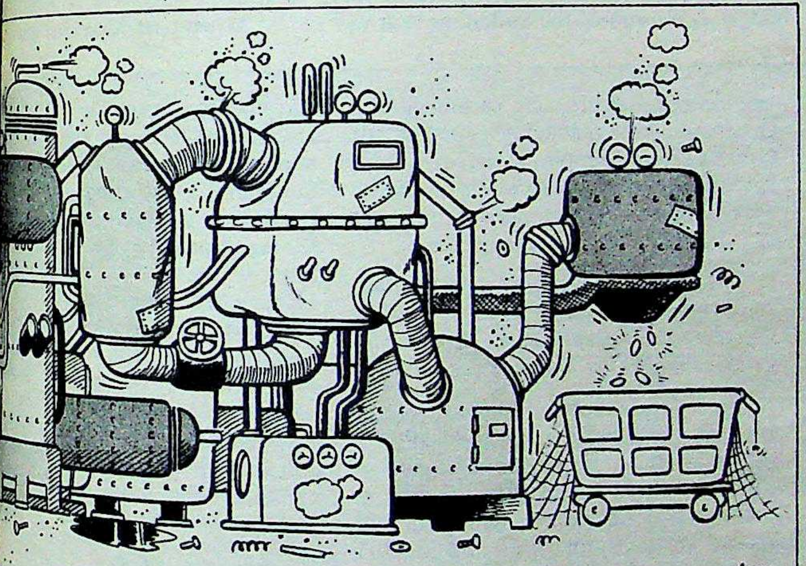
A drop in government exp would logically lead to a fall in tax virtual disappearance of deficit bud exercise would leave more money wit who earn it rather than with those w it and it would be, for that reason, far more productively than its pres the state. Those who do not ear squander it: that is why governme diture is doubly wasteful.

It matters very little *how* the ment collects its revenue, as lon *much* it collects is kept to a minim who believe that the value added ta a consumption tax would radical

's economic fortunes or put a
on black money may be reminded
e is indeed a VAT in Britain, not the
growing economy in the world.
s far as I know, has neither.

e the Government decides—and it
e a political and not an economic
—that it would take so much out of
's kitty and no more, many pro-
uld sort themselves out, leaving
en and others to think up ways of
ise the extra cash and make pro-
er than hide the little cash that the
minister lets them keep. Growth
the minds of men, and only later on
ry floor, and it is the mind that has
e free before the growth process can
first step.

Government, however, continues
occupied with small things, trifles
ld delight a small-minded accoun-
d keep him busy for months. The
a the tax provisions to disallow in-
s and concessions beyond 70 per cent
s profits in any year is a sad example
petty minds work. The provision that
per cent of excess turnover from ex-
ll not be taxed is another instance.
uction of tax on the banks' lending
m 7 to 3.5 per cent is welcome, but
do away with it altogether? These
sy methods of raising revenue and
not worth the trouble.



WHY ARE our economic managers
so unimaginative? Why can't they
get up and say that enough is enough
time has come for a major initiative
ing the country's affairs? Against
kground of a stagnating economy
is now evidence that contrary to
the Government says 1982-83 will end up with zero growth—why can't the finance minister, or better still, the prime minister come up with bold proposals to deal with an economy that is now qualitatively different from what it was, say, 10 or 15 years ago, but is still an economy plagued by stagnation?

Conservatism: To blame it all on global recession or oil prices—which are now in fact coming down—is no longer enough. We are, as a society, resistant to rapid change and, though we do not oppose growth, we fear it. It is happening in other countries too, even in those which are far ahead of us. Economist Mancur Olson observes in his recent book *The Rise and Decline of Nations* that in most countries, during long periods of peaceful development "without upheaval or invasion", people tend to organise themselves to protect their own livelihoods—and the effect is invariably bad for economic growth.

Along with much else, World War II destroyed a great, tangled network of producers' cartels, trade associations and legal restrictions that had hampered economic growth in continental Europe. In contrast, the United States, which was farthest from destruction, has had the lowest rate of economic growth in the industrial world over the past three decades. Britain, closer to the war but never invaded, has had the second lowest rate. With age, British society has acquired so many strong organisations and collusions that it suffers from an institutional sclerosis that slows down its adaptation to changing circumstances and technologies.

Economic Truths: Conventional theory holds that a strong and stable political system is important to economic development. If that is true, asks Olson, why did growth rates remain consistently high in France in the late '50s when the country was teetering on the edge of a military coup over Algeria? At a time when the organisation of special-interest groups might otherwise have begun to slow down the continental economies, the arrival of the European Common Market and the dismantling of tariffs forced on them another wave of disruption and expansion. It was Britain's historic bad luck to join the Common Market 15 years after it was founded, just as it was finally slowing down.

Economics is based on the assumption that people want to get richer. And that's quite true in the sense that everybody would like to be paid more money for the jobs that they are now doing. But real economic growth at high rates is a deeply threatening force. It may destroy your present job, and push you towards another unfamiliar one in another place—perhaps even in another country. Fast economic growth makes you richer, but it also makes you live differently. It makes children grow up to be very different from their parents.

Most people, reasonably enough, focus primarily on the immediate impact of economic growth on their own lives, rather than on the broad and gradual benefits that it brings to society as a whole. Hardly anybody opposes growth in principle, just as hardly anybody opposes taxes in principle. But most people are pretty good at organising themselves for protection against it, in ways that slow the growth—as well tax collections—down.

False Premises: Is this true of India too? I suspect it is. When there was talk of a real liberalisation of controls during the Janata regime, the most concerned people were the businessmen, particularly those who were well entrenched and were naturally averse to newcomers upsetting their nice little applecart. An open economy is by definition a competitive economy, and competition can be ugly and leaves scars behind. The main opposition to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) loan comes from those who are affected by liberalised imports though they are not opposed to the loan in principle. It is not generally realised that it is these imports that have kept prices down despite a large deficit in last year's budget. We seem to want it both ways—imports to keep prices down, as long as they do not hit your business!

The Government also wants it both ways. It takes away a big slice of your cake but at the same time provides 'incentives' and 'concessions' so that you can go on baking that cake. It does not realise that the best incentive in such a case is the assurance that your cake is your own, but for a small slice that you may care to share with your hungry government. In economics, as in everything else, only a fool would think that you can have your cake and eat it too.

THE BUDGET

Tinkering Timidly

PRANAB Mukherjee's budget has fallen flatter than a pancake, and only partly because the pre-budget levies stole the main budget's thunder. The finance minister has also achieved the extraordinary feat of displeasing everyone, largely because the Government is on a taxing and spending spree. The budget, says the general consensus, has failed to address itself to immediate needs: slack industrial demand, wasteful expenditure, exports and agricultural stagnation.

The widespread disillusionment extends to the general economic situation. Almost everyone INDIA TODAY *spoke to—politicians and businessmen, officials and housewives, stockbrokers and farmers, bankers and exporters—felt the need for fundamental departures, and there was a general impatience with the nit-picking attention to detail that seemed to pass for the budgetary exercise.*

Charan Singh
Lok Dal president and former prime minister

I don't attach any importance to this budget. It is a run-of-the-mill affair that will not make the slightest dent in our p After all, we have had 36 budgets became free and we still have more p before and we are still the poorest c the world. What is so big about th or anything that Mrs Gandhi does reverse the trend?

The Government is on a vast spree. It has spent over Rs 1,000 cro Asiad and maybe another Rs 100 the present jamboree (Non-aligned Where does all this money go. I wo man in the street certainly doesn't g not know if even a dictator can sp much money. And every pie has co taxes.

When I sat down after speakin

N.A. PALKHIVALA

Passing Judgement

THE FIGURES of attendance have ballooned steadily. From just 800 in 1958, when he first analysed the Union budget, the numbers of "Nani Palkhivala's listeners swelled to 4,000 a decade later, to 15,000 by the mid-'70s and over 18,000 last year.

□

"In the North Block (housing the Finance Ministry) the four elemental forces are instability, complexity, injustice bred by a total disregard for constitutional morality and pettiness compounded by obscurantism. It is amazing how much major attention is paid in the budget to insignificant trivia."

□

Last fortnight the leading taxation and constitutional affairs lawyer's impassioned dissertation on the budget attracted an incredible 35,000 listeners who spilled off the chairs onto public stands, squatted in the aisles and empty spaces and clustered in packed rows at the periphery of Bombay's Brabourne Stadium.

Barring the budget itself, possibly no event in Bombay's teeming financial world is as eagerly awaited as the annual Palkhivala post-mortem which comes four days later. "Mr Palkhivala has the capacity to comprehend completely, and explain dramatically, the whole budget in one speech," explained Vasant Sheth, chairman and managing director of Great Eastern Shipping Company, who has attended Palkhivala's addresses for over 20 years. "His understanding and mastery and the display of a photographic memory are like performances in themselves; and I think that, apart from the fact that people are agitated about eroded standards of living and identify him as their spokesman, it is also the strong element of drama and style which draws in the sharply-growing crowds."

□

"It cannot be repeated too often that small minds and large republics go ill together. Our fiscal proposals are singularly devoid of vision and imagination."

□

Acknowledged Expert: The growing ranks of Palkhivala admirers have created problems for the Forum Of Free Enterprise which has organised the ritual post-budget public meeting for the last 26 years, starting with a small group of invitees in the now closed Greens Hotel. Keeping pace with the crowds has meant a constant search for ever larger spaces to hold the meetings, and frequent changes of venue. By the mid-'60s, Greens was too cramped and the Forum shifted the scene of Palkhivala's speech to the Cavasjee Jehangir Hall. Two years later that gave way to the Cricket Club of India's lawns. Last fortnight, even these pro unequal to the task of accommoda the massive gathering, and the c Brabourne Stadium (used in the past for major public events and jazz festi became the latest venue for the expert's brilliant exposition.

□

"The non-corporate sector has been granted relief of a mere Rs 2 crore, a pittance in a total budget of Rs 34,000 crore."

□

Today, Palkhivala's annual getary pronouncements have bec something of a Bombay institution tended by a broad cross-section of city's educated minority—from top industrialists to small traders, bus executives and professionals to secretaries and students—the cour veterans' direct, hard-hitting critic Government policy-making is lapped up by the listeners. The bac chers, in fact, break lustily into ap each time he makes a particularly point. Tape-recorders and notebook brandished by many among his aud and his words recorded for posteri

□

"In short, the budget is calculat underwrite stagnation. It will not pr be the production engineer of ec growth. It will have no effect on the index: that is the index comprisin flation, poverty and unemployment."

□

That Palkhivala's speeches hav come Gospel truth for many of teners is apparent from the grow sponse to them. Last fortnight, mond broker from Kumbakona Tamil Nadu made the pilgrima Bombay so that he could return

...'s address to the Parliament. Y.B. ... who was my deputy and who, I ... now Mrs Gandhi's man, said that ...sahib (Charan Singh) was taking ...ry back 200 years. If I talk about ... I am a reactionary. If you talk about ...plants and satellites, you are a pro-

...-well costs about Rs 5 lakh and ... 350 acres of land. With a hund-... you can irrigate nearly a million ... the finance minister had said here's a ... crore for Bihar, a hundred crore for ... Pradesh etc, I would have said the ...ent is on the right track. What does ... if you produce more steel or more ...s or more paper if the bulk of our ...nnot buy even a steel rod or a yard ...

...Government should hand over all ...s other than nuclear and defence to ...ate sector. If you cannot run an ..., give it to somebody who can.

Dr Charat Ram
Shriram group of industries

I am disappointed. One thing that was expected was a reduction in taxes. Instead, corporate taxes have gone up, personal taxes have gone up. The increase in depreciation allowance is a plus point but it is not a major benefit. The Government will collect something like Rs 3,000 crore through the budget as well as pre-budget levies and this is going to make quite a big hole in your pocket and mine. We now pay tax on everything. If I give a peon Rs 15, I have to pay tax on that.

Let us talk of the economy as a whole, rather than just the budget. A business climate is what we talk and make of. We can always talk ourselves into a boom or a slump, if we talk about it long enough. I have had a big difference of opinion with my business friends over this recession business. As far as I can see, there is no recession, as this term is understood. Take fertilisers. Demand is up by 8 per cent, production is also up. Yet the industry has not done well because some of the increase in demand has been taken up by imports. So we are left with a large unutilised capacity. The budget should have done something to remove this slack but it hasn't.

What is true of fertilisers is also true of other industries. In no industry, whether trucks or tractors, or anything else, is the production this year less than last year's. But it could have been even better, if only the Government had a right mix of policies.

We need a major shift in policies. Tinkering will simply not do. Take exports. Some small additional incentives have been given

...nding of the tax expert's speech, to be ...ed at meetings of diamond dealers ... trade chambers back home. A ...ry Club president from Miraj made ...ar arrangements for his fellow-Rotarians, and the Forum Of Free Enterprise itself used multiple cameras to make video films of the meeting which will be widely circulated around the country. Said M.R. Pai, vice-president and co-founder of the Forum: "Nani Palkhivala has a remarkable capacity for going straight to the heart of the matter, and not only interpreting laws but explaining them in a manner which is understood by even the lay person, and this has contributed to his great popularity."

□

"The Budget contains pronouncements but no philosophy. Its effect will be ephemeral as scent on a handkerchief."

□

Wide Appeal: The Palkhivala lure today draws in fans from around the country, with company directors and lawyers flying in specially to attend his budget speech. Many companies, including Tata Finlay, reportedly arranged board meetings in Bombay to coincide with the speech, so that directors would be able to enlarge their knowledge of tax law at no extra expense. For many industrialists, the no-holds-barred indictment of governmental petty-mindedness, and Palkhivala's reasoned arguments for less complex laws and a rationalised tax structure, have become an irreplaceable source of information.

□

"The repeated official references to the abolition of excise on pressure cookers is quite appropriate—the common man's goose has been properly cooked."

□

Explained D.R. Pendse, economic adviser to the Tata group, who has been a long-standing member of Palkhivala's regular audience: "Palkhivala is giving people a reasoned view, not only of tax and the budget itself, but also of a wide range of subjects relating to government policy, industrialisation and development. He uses the budget as an excuse, but goes much further than merely discussing the tax implications, and he does this by reducing technicalities and dry legal terms to simple language."

□

"The new section (on minimum corporate tax) virtually directs some of our best companies to walk slowly backward on a conveyor belt which is moving slowly forward."

□

At last count, the near-phenomenal Palkhivala success was spawning many imitators. Last fortnight Bombay's financial world was host to a string of taxation lawyers who addressed public meetings on the implications of the budget. But the doyen of the budget pundits remains Palkhivala, and his domain is likely to remain secure from inroads by the newcomers.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

Palkhivala addressing the meeting: enthusiastic response

in that budget, but what we need is a major thrust. I believe that there is a very good scope for exports of agro-based products if we pour capital, technology and management inputs into agriculture. Our exports from this sector can go up to Rs 10,000 crore against only about Rs 2,500 crore at present. We should have export promotion councils for onions, for fruits, for sugar etc. but before we do so, we should modernize agriculture intensively. Agriculture is now just a cottage industry and this won't do. I do not see any thinking on these lines in the budget.

Ashok Jain
president-elect, FICCI

The finance minister's task was to revive the economy, but he has failed completely in this objective. Nothing has been done to give any demand stimulus in those industrial sectors facing slack demand. Mr Mukherjee seems to be frightened of inflation, so he has been cautious instead of being bold. The economy can absorb a much bigger budget deficit than Rs 1,555 crore. A deficit of between Rs 2,000 crore and Rs 2,500 crore would not have harmed the economy, as even then the growth of money supply would have been within safe limits.

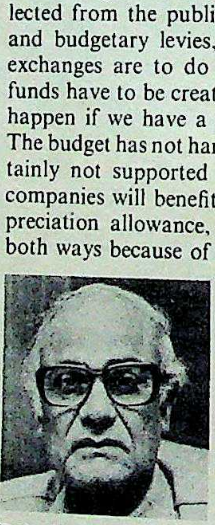
The single most objectionable step in the budget is the losing disallowance of 20 per cent of expenditure on advertising, travelling and sales promotion. These are legitimate expenses, and the 20 per cent disallowance will lead to losses for companies in consumer industries and trading enterprises. The introduction of a minimum tax for companies will have an immediate effect on corporate cash flows. Tax incentives are meant to canalise investment and help industrial growth. And for every Rs 1 crore invested the Government gets Rs 1.3 crore in excise duties and sales tax after three years.

As for specific industries, the excise reduction for sugar brings down sugar prices by only Rs 2.50 per quintal. This does not even neutralise the Rs 20 price increase last December. In the case of paper, a number of units are unable to sell in today's market condition. But the budgetary measures will increase production costs by Rs 300 to Rs 400 per tonne, and the excise burden will go higher by a further Rs 300 to Rs 400 per tonne. Many factories will not be able to pass these on to the customers, so these units now face losses and industrial sickness.

Laldas Jamnadas
president, Bombay Stock Exchange

On the whole the budget is not very favourable for the stock exchanges. It has given definite reliefs to different groups of persons, but it does not support the stock exchange as a whole. I don't think the market has boomed after the budget. It has certainly remained steady, but it is not a boom. Approximately Rs 3,000 crore has been collected from the public, Rs 2,000 crore in pre-budget hikes and almost Rs 1,000 crore in budgetary levies. In my opinion, at least some of this Rs 3,000 crore would have come to my stock exchange in the normal course. But now, due to increased prices for various commodities and services, that money will not be forthcoming.

A large amount of money has been collected from the public in pre-budget hikes and budgetary levies, so now if the stock exchanges are to do well, new sources of funds have to be created, and that will only happen if we have a favourable monsoon. The budget has not harmed us, but it has certainly not supported us either. No doubt companies will benefit due to increased depreciation allowance, but the benefits cut both ways because of the other increase.



B.S. Bhatnagar
general manager, Tata Exports

At a time when there is great need for maximising exports, the new finance bill has introduced a number of drastic and far-reaching changes that are liable to affect the momentum of the country's export endeavours. The bill has suddenly put an end to the benefits of Section 35B from March 1, 1983; introduced disallowance of expenditure to the extent of 20 per cent incurred in India on travelling, entertainment, hotel bills, maintenance of cars and other transports (even for foreign clients) and on export promotion —the heads on which benefits of Section 35B used to be available—and introduced a uniform fiscal incentive to the extent of 5 per cent of incremental exports over ding year. This measure, though too simplistic.

In fact, the above proposed worded that the benefit on expo under government-to-government imbank credit lines (deemed expo deals, and exports to rupee curren would not be eligible unless the defi exports in the bill specifically include above. The bill, in any case, omits services to be eligible for the above

Export of consultancy and ment services that have in recent year recognised as major sources of expo only per se but also for indirectly pro exports of many products, would fiscal incentive, according to the prese

M.P. Chitale
tax expert

We are living, as a nation, far our productive capacity. The real deficit is Rs 3,700 crore, and that too of windfall gains due to Rs 1,000 crore vances and loans from the public sector year it was bearer bonds; the year bef IMF trust fund receipts... these are all receipts which do not balance the bu fact we now have revenue deficits.

Our entire public sector and sector industry, which is depreciating on historical costs basis and running sory profits, is living on capital tion. This extends down to the po have to cut up our forests for their and fuel. The whole country is surv capital consumption, and nothing been done about this in the budget.

It will be difficult for all of us to our budgets. The Central Governm tes, companies, families... all will be to manage their budgets. And nothing done about this unless we take far- steps to restrain our rising scale of exp tions. Instead, we are giving further tax exemptions and encouraging pectations. An exempt income of R (Rs 15,000 plus Rs 10,000 under va vings schemes) means that, in a fa four or five members, income of up lakh can be made tax-free by di income in the names of the wife minor children. Will this help to vings or put pressure on expendi is the question.

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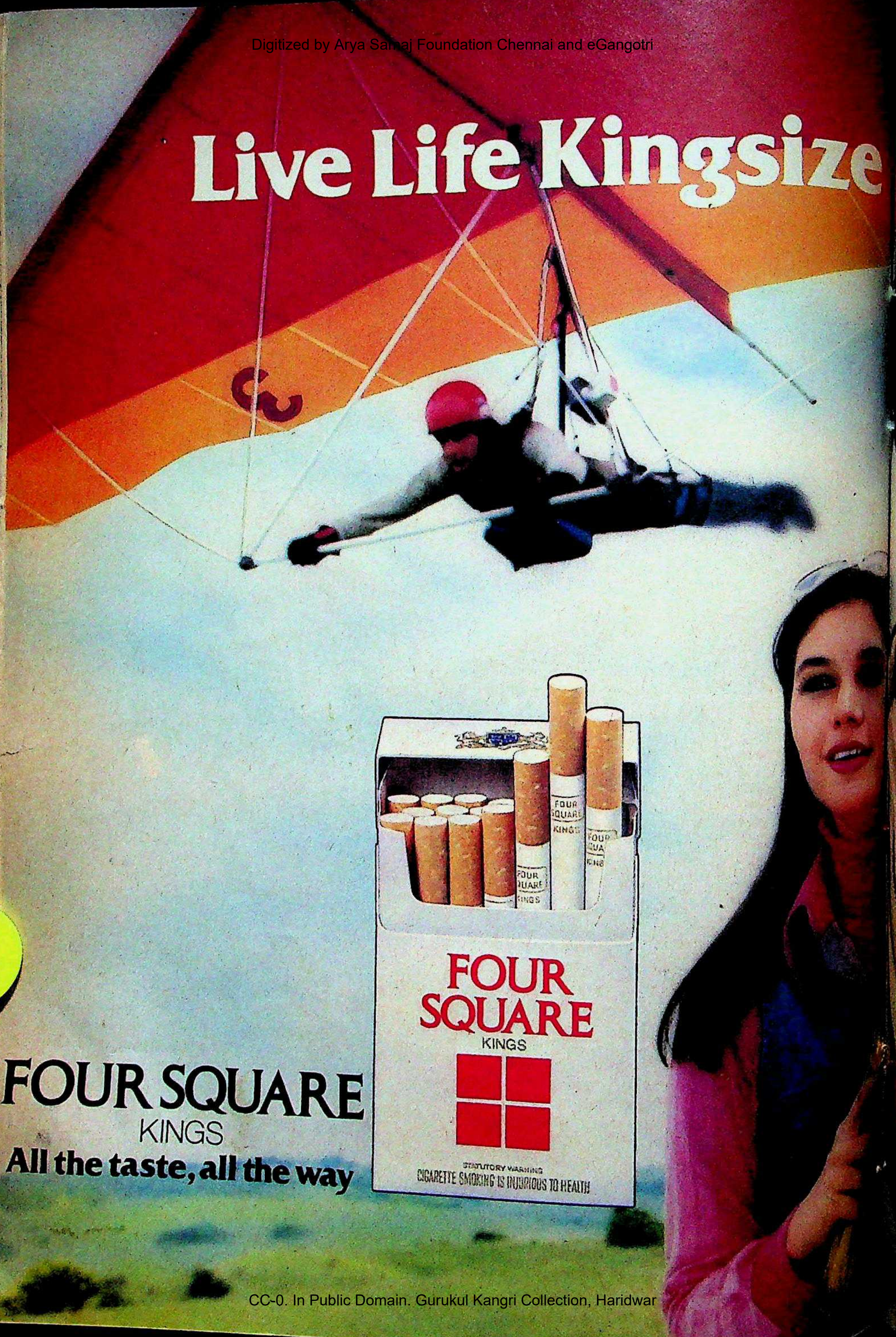
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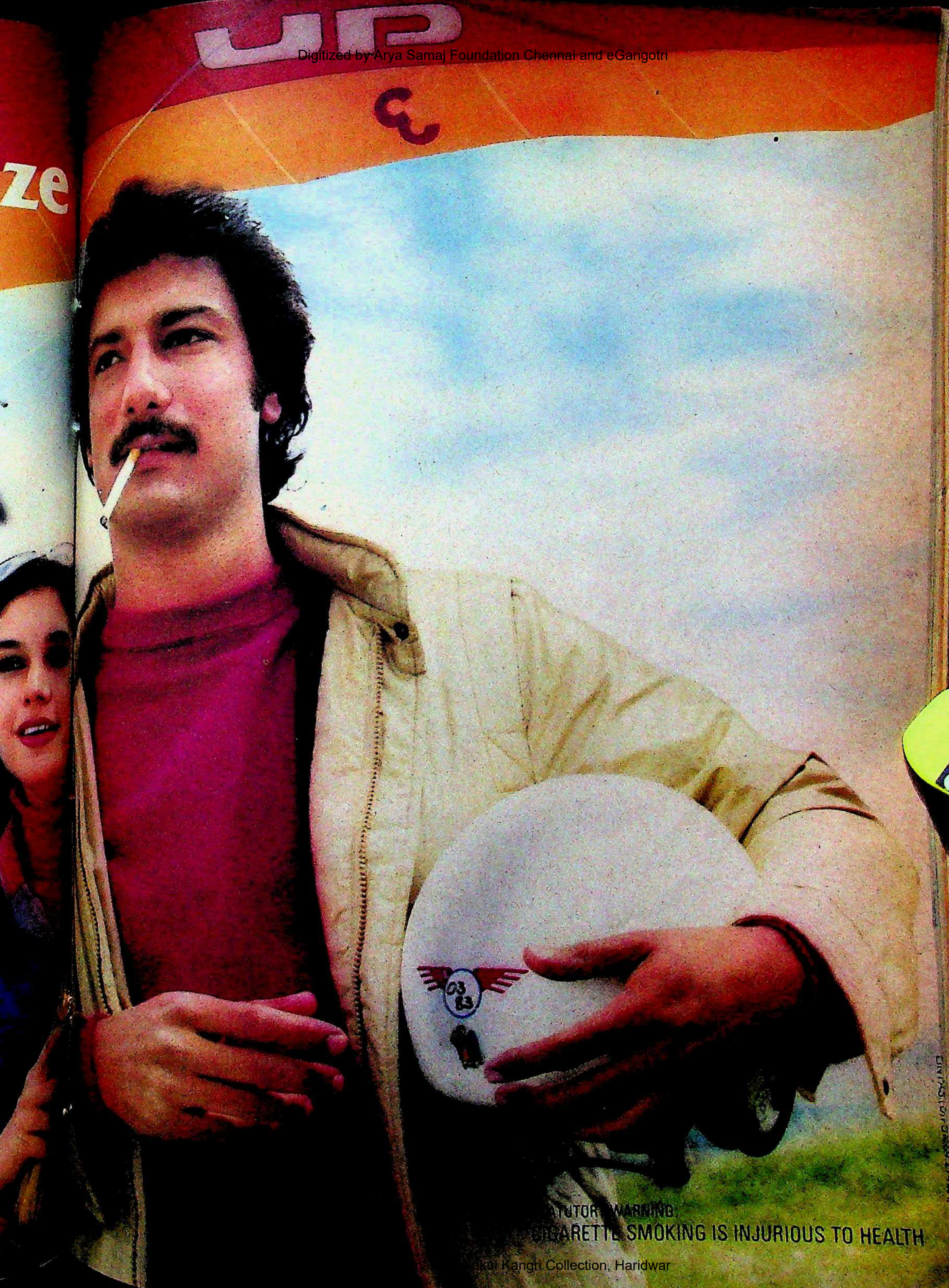
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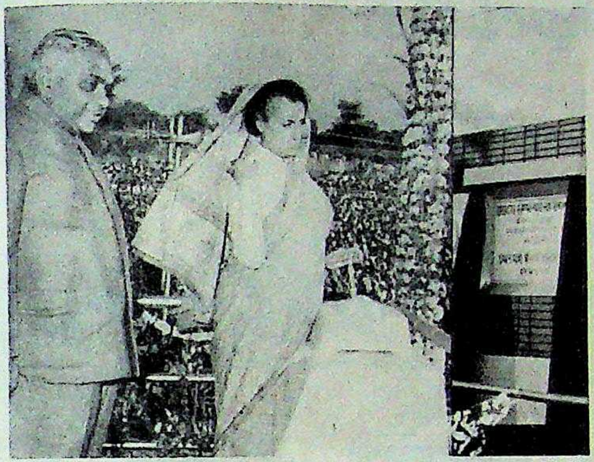
On A Losing Track

THE NEW railway line will go a long way in the development of this area." That was Prime Minister Gandhi speaking in Rampur, Pradesh, on January 9, 1974, ying the foundation-stone for d guage line linking Rampur dwani. Nearly a decade later, s 12.50 crore project has not off the drawing-board, and the ns nestling in the Himalayan s have yet to see the 78.40 km ch was to have linked them 1980, benefiting the over 5 lakh tion of the area.

at is more, at this rate r and Haldwani are unlikely to e their broad gauge link. Until last the railways had spent only Rs 1.28 it—all of it as administrative expen- ilway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan ury has allotted it only Rs 10,000 in get for 1983–84—which one Cong- from Uttar Pradesh described as a of respect for our beloved Prime er Indira Gandhi".

ection Promises: In fact, according to ay budget, the Rampur-Haldwani only one of over 40 projects—total over Rs 700 crore—limping ever so towards completion. Rs 150 crore has been n the projects, but they r all practical purposes as s dead. For instance, Rs 870 crore is needed complete the new lines, e outlay for this purpose Rs 55.80 crore. Foundanes for the projects were er by Mrs Gandhi or a on of railway ministers n 1972 and 1982. Quick rial changes and inade- funds provided in successive railway s have contributed largely to the As a result, costs have risen 50 per

most of the cases, the projects have out to be pre-election gimmicks—in Mrs Gandhi laid the Rampur-Hald- e's foundation-stone three months the elections to the state Assembly. g to local political pressures, the rail- ministration grandly announced new rkshops, overbridges, electrification mes and conversions of metre gauge ad gauge, without, however, getting the formal approval of the Planning Commission. The powers that be were successful in roping in the prime minister for quite a few of the inauguration ceremonies. In addition, the projects were kicked off at a time of acute financial pressures.


Mrs Gandhi inaugurates the Shahdara-Saharanpur link

Stagnant Projects: Of 32 stagnant projects Mrs Gandhi laid the foundation-stones for eight and former Janata railway minister Madhu Dandavate followed with six. The others were handled by other railway ministers. Mrs Gandhi's projects include:

- the 17.40 km broad gauge line connecting Howrah and Sheakhala in West Bengal. Mrs Gandhi inaugurated the project in 1973; original cost: Rs 3.50 crore. The link was to be completed by 1978. The cost has shot up to Rs 7 crore, while the railways have spent only Rs 10,000. And Choudhury in his new budget has allotted only Rs 10,000;

> **"It has been observed that arising out of socio-political compulsions, the railways agree to undertake a large number of requests for new lines, to buy time purely as a policy of appeasement."**
>
> **—Report of the Railway Reforms Committee, 1982–83**

- the restoration of the dilapidated track between Chettauni and Bagah in Bihar, a Rs 10 crore project Mrs Gandhi inaugurated on October 20, 1973. By March 1, 1983, only 9 per cent of the work had been completed, at a cost of Rs 4.17 crore. The 1983–84 budget provides for Rs 5,000;
- the conversion to broad guage of the 77.50 km metre guage track connecting Moradabad and Ramnagar in Uttar Pradesh. Mrs Gandhi laid this foundation-stone on October 10, 1974, on an election tour. Original cost: Rs 7.50 crore. In the last eight years, the railways have spent only Rs 98 lakh; meanwhile, the cost—for a project five years behind schedule—has gone up to Rs 11 crore, although the latest budget provides for only Rs 1 crore.

THE MAJOR reason for the wasteful delay is the frequent ministerial changes, with every successive railway czar plumping for projects in his constituency, state or region, and drawing funds away from the others. Says Dandavate: "I never laid a foundation-stone unless the Planning Commission had approved it. Sufficient finances were arranged for each and every project before it was inaugurated. Unfortunately, political considerations have come in the way of their completion because Congress(I) ministers have not provided enough money to keep the projects going."

Dandavate's accusatory statement rings true in the light of the fact that five of the six projects he inaugurated have not found favour with the Congress(I). For example, Dandavate laid the foundation-stone of a Rs 10 crore enterprise which was to lay 60.50 km of new broad guage line between Kapadvanj and Modasa in Maharashtra, a job to be completed by 1982–83. By end-1982, the railways had spent only Rs 1.29 crore and the 1983–84 budget gives the project the princely sum of Rs 10,000.

Similarly, on April 30, 1978, Dandavate inaugurated the Rs 21.52 crore new broad guage line between Apta and Roha in Madhya Pradesh. Meant to be completed by 1983, the project was doing quite well until last year, with over Rs 12 crore spent on it. But the new budget provides only Rs 2.50 crore, dooming the new line to stagnation.

Big Delay: Dandavate is not the only victim. On April 5, 1980, former railway minister Kamalapati Tripathi laid the foundation-stone for the conversion of the Varanasi-Bhatari metre guage track. The

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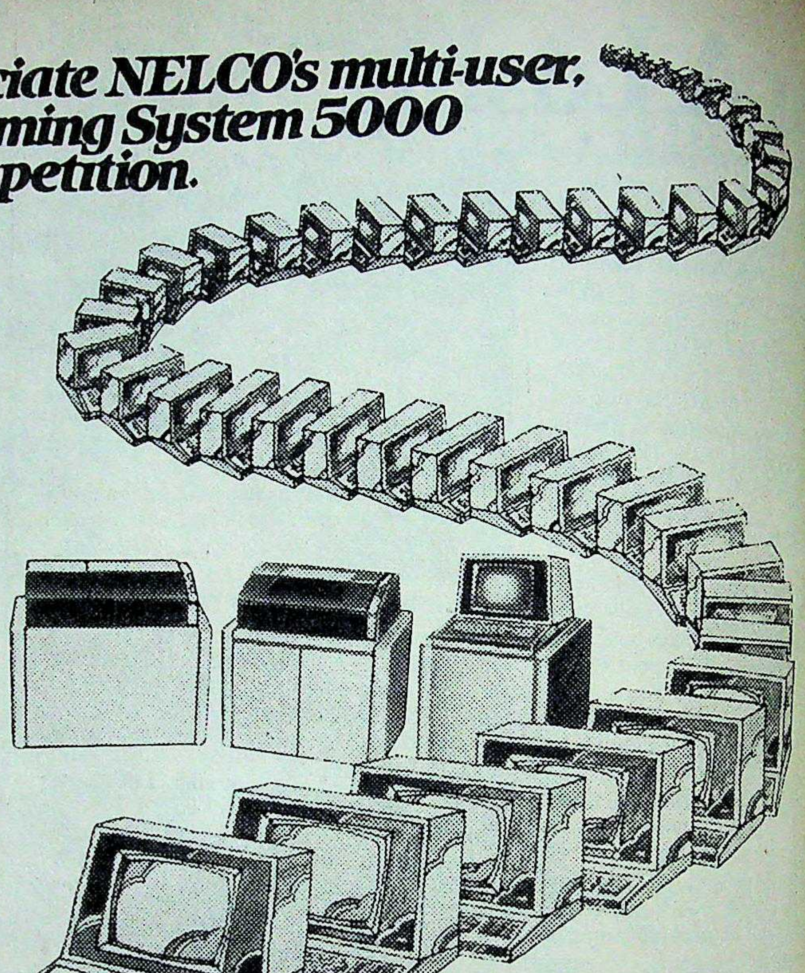

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raison d'etre for a few new railway lines. Says the report: "The subject of new lines has become sensitive in the background of the increasingly regional aspirations for more and more new lines.... It has further been observed that arising out of socio-political compulsions, the railways also agree to undertake a large number of requests for new lines, to buy time purely as a policy of appeasement."

The report concluded: "There is no reasonable chance of these on-going new lines projects being completed in the current Sixth Plan and even in the succeeding two plans unless the plan outlays are increased substantially. It would thus take not less than another 10 years to complete the on-going projects provided no further line is sanctioned during the interregnum and ignoring the escalation in prices."

Finance Shortage: During the debate on the railway budget in the Lok Sabha, Choudhury said: "It is not the question of expanding the railways. The vital question now is how to restore the intrinsic health of the railways. The efficiency of the system is going down every day. We could not take up many of the jobs because of the constraints of resources." Blaming the Planning Commission for reducing the railways' share of the total plan outlay from over 15 per cent in the First Plan to less than 5 per cent in the Sixth Plan, Choudhury added that with the Rs 5,100 crore allotted for the current plan period the railways could meet only half of their "need-based requirements".

Choudhury ended his impassioned 45-minute speech by saying "we are indeed in bad shape", but refrained from making any firm commitment on on-going projects. He affirmed: "I am proud of the potential of the railway staff but am bound by the constraint of resources." However, he skimmed over the delicate issue of using foundation-stones to further political prestige. After all, promises are the very stuff of politics. —PRABHU CHAWLA

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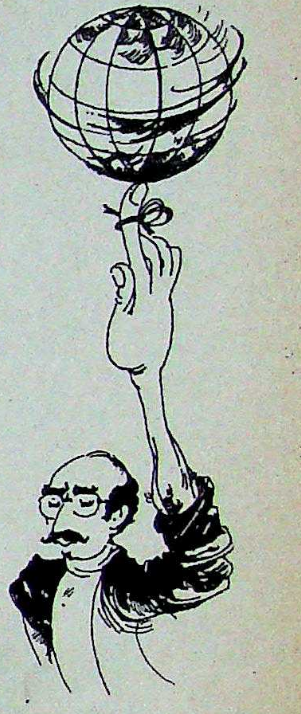

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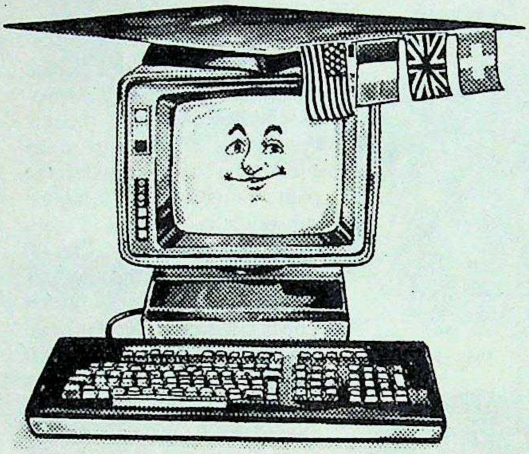

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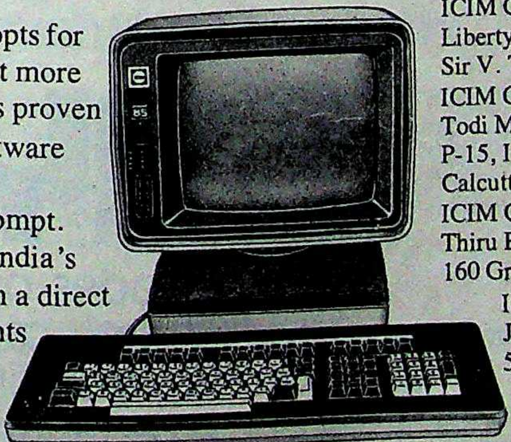

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STEEL

Stealing Time

FOR CLOSE to a decade after the prime minister laid the foundation-stone in 1970–71, the Vishakhapatnam steel plant got neither money nor even final project clearance. That situation changed when the project was included in the 1980–85 five-year plan—but there is still no money. Last fortnight, with the announcement that money would be doled out in miserly sums through the new year as well, and with the project's chief executive packing his bags because of differences with Steel Ministry officials, the country's "new" steel project seemed mired in Vishakhapatnam's mud.

K.V.B. Pantulu, managing director of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd—the project's official name—said in his letter of resignation, submitted last December, that he was resigning for personal reasons. But there was little doubt that Pantulu had sharp differences with Company Chairman and Steel Secretary A.S. Gill, while the mounting frustrations of trying to set up a project without sufficient money had caused him to throw up his hands. Said Pantulu: "The money flowing in in recent months was shocking. In November, we wanted Rs 26 crore but got Rs 8 crore. In December, Rs 33 crore were needed but we got no money at all. January got us just Rs 10 crore, and in February when we needed Rs 45 crore we got Rs 10 crore again."

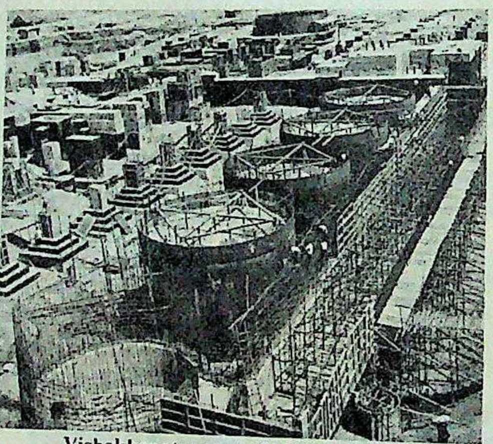
Behind Schedule: Pantulu claims nevertheless that the situation can be redeemed. "We are only eight to 10 weeks behind schedule, and in some areas this can be made up if the funds flow in." But with the budget providing just Rs 187 crore—one-fifth of the Rs 932 crore which the project authorities had wanted—Vishakhapatnam seemed to be going the way of all Indian steel projects.

Of the three new steel projects supposed to be under way, a firm decision is yet to be taken on the one at Vijayanagar in Karnataka—for which Mrs Gandhi laid the foundation-stone at the same time as for Vishakhapatnam, in 1970–71. The second project, at Paradip in Orissa, has got snarled in increasingly confused negotiations for a suitable foreign partner. A deal signed with Davy McKee of the UK was called off last year, and officials have since then been shuttling between Delhi and Moscow, and between Delhi and London, in an effort to get things moving—with little luck.

That leaves Vishakhapatnam as the only greenfield steel project under implementation. But with the money proving scarce when project work should have been at its peak, what loomed over the country's steel programme was a large question mark.

A visit to Vishakhapatnam provided no answers, only a series of gloomy statistics. Although 37,900 tonnes of fabrication should have been done by last December, less than two-thirds of that had been done by the end of February. Less than half the targeted 12,600 tonnes of structural erection work had been completed. Even ordering of equipment was way behind schedule: instead of 2.39 lakh tonnes, only 1.55 lakh tonnes of equipment had been ordered.

Sluggish Pace: The sluggish pace of work was visible everywhere. The railways had laid only 35.9 km of the 208 km of track required to ship raw materials to the plant, while the state Government—which has been pressing the Centre for more project funds—had started work on only half the 158 km long Yeluru canal that is to bring water to the steel city. Work on the washeries that will clean the coal to be used in the steel plant is yet to start.



Vishakhapatnam steel plant: setbacks

The project is slated for completion in 1988, but a senior manager at the worksite feared that "Vishakhapatnam might be going the Bokaro way". That gloomy reference is to the unhappy record of the Bokaro steel plant, the first stage of which was commissioned after a decade of effort: twice the scheduled time. The plant's expansion was initially slated to be completed in 1978, but is now promised for end-1983—and even that might not be achieved.

Vishakhapatnam has, if anything, made even heavier weather. After years of being in limbo, when work was finally about to start on the civil engineering, an agitation over jobs being reserved for the local people resulted in the Hindustan Steelwor truction Ltd being unable to deploy plus manpower it had at Bokaro an And project officials now regret that Government seems unable to m effective pressure lobby in New Delh project funds flowing.

Each delay has brought an incr the project cost: from the initial R crore to Rs 2,935 crore in the revised report and now to Rs 3,897 crore. W flow of money slowing down still furthe cost is expected now to rise to Rs 5,00 almost two-and-a-half times the init Project officials say costs rise by Rs for each day of delay.

Many Changes: Frequent cha the top have not helped. Starting August 1978, when S.N. Kaza was m executive director, there have been fo at the helm in a little over four year with Pantulu making his exit late month, a fifth man will take

Even during the brief perio they are around, the project's ma directors spend much of their time ling between Vishakhapatnam and Armed with limited financial powe contracts over Rs 5 crore in valu the board's clearance, and that m trip to Delhi—and frequently in c with ministry officials over tec choices and the awarding of co the task of handling the proj become singularly unrewarding. ulu's exit was reportedly provoke final stages by the decision, taken his opposition, to award the cont the steel plant's captive power pla Italian firm. But Pantulu dec comment on the question of co

For 12,000 families displaced t land available for the steel plant, th have caused additional hardship. On of them have been rehabilitated, and their land was acquired since 1972 the being compensated at the land rates ling in 1966. There have been the in court cases, and when the verdicts w favour of higher compensation amo Government went in appeal to the Court and then the Supreme Court. o lose. The displaced families were also mised one job per family in the steel p but—with only 22,000 jobs going—th mise seems unlikely to be fulfilled.

Chief Minister N.T. Rama descended on Vishakhapatnam la night to lay the foundation-stone fo rehabilitation centre for the displac lies, and thundered that he would make sure that Telugus got their du more important question remained wered: when would the country get

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Vis

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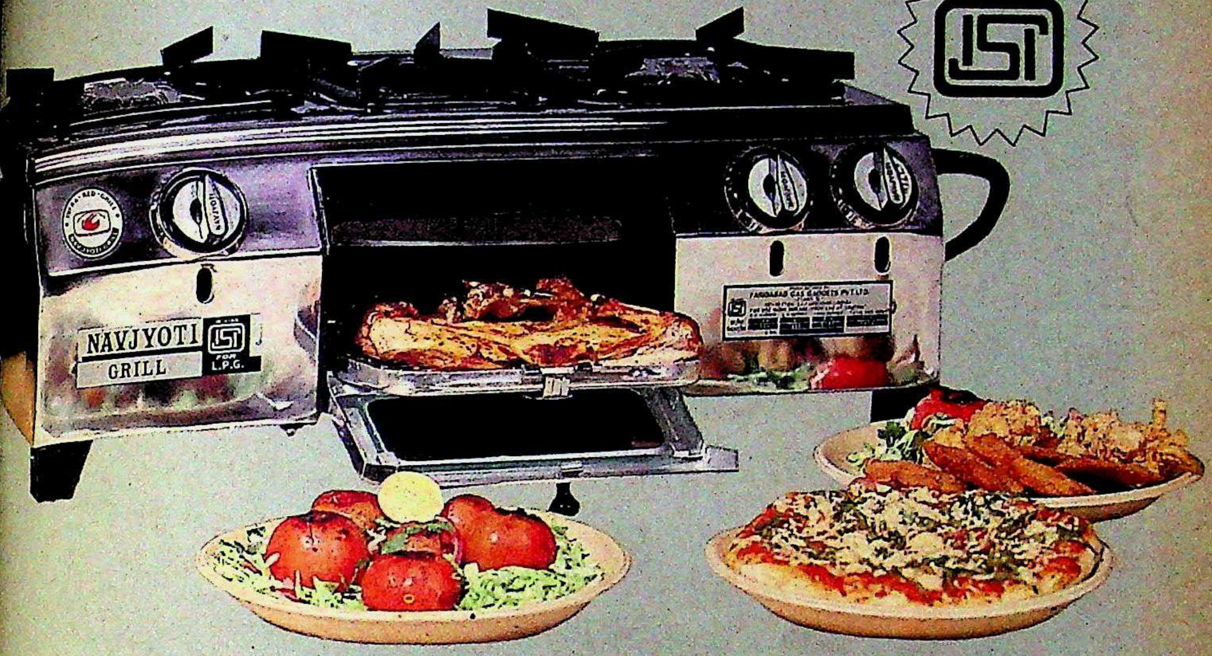

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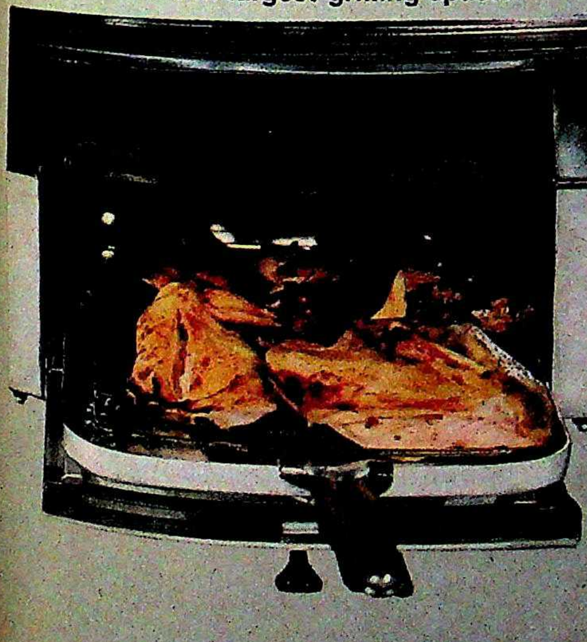

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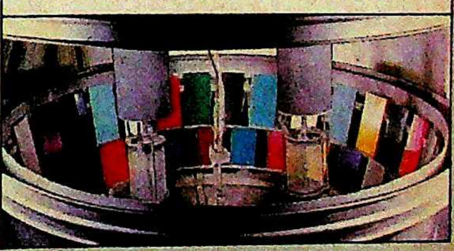

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unctured Hopes

AR MANUFACTURERS do not normally expect to be taken for a ride, least of all by a government which has been promising to help avour was supposed to come in the reduced customs and excise duties ficient cars, which all four car com- planning to turn out in the near ith taxes accounting for almost half of a car, or even 60 per cent in the models with a high import con- ew models will all cost over Rs 1 out a sharp cut in duties.

what industry proposes, the Go- disposes. And when the tax reduc- re announced in budget week, e car company was ll! The lone exception Government's own Udyog, which had been t for a reduction in duty from 160 to 40 per equally favoured by excise duty structure. unheard of," said an okesman of the Cal- sed Hindustan Motors, of Ambassador cars. any government that equality before the scriminate in this

Models: At stake in s the future of an indus- en recently out of its d slumber. The action October 1980, when vernment nationalised and announced its of producing a cheap, ent car in less than ars.

anised into action to emselves, the existing s intensified their r new models of their dustan Motors had already settled Vauxhall body, and followed it up ith plans for a new Isuzu engine as ier Automobiles of Bombay deci- a new body, that of the Fiat 124, been shopping around for a new 00. In Madras, Standard Motors had dropped out of the car business ars ago—decided to make a come- a British Leyland car. Together, companies had committed themsel- total investment of around Rs 200 th more to come.

But with the enormous contribution made by taxes to a car's final price, the wisdom of such investment depended more than anything else on the Government—especially when the industry had also been getting ready to treble production in short order. With Maruti Udyog planning to produce 40,000 cars, Hindustan Motors seeking permission to raise its capacity from 30,000 to 50,000 and Premier also seeking a larger production run, the industry was in effect looking for a 1.2 lakh annual market—against 40,000 so far.

If car prices were not to come down, there was no way the market would expand to thrice its size. In short, the Government's taxes would determine whether the future held an automobile boom or a graveyard of car companies which attempted too much.

Duty Announcement: Rarely, therefore, had an industry's future hung so precariously on a budget announcement. And when it came, it was an unpleasant shock. The reduction in customs duty applied to only those cars with an engine displacement of 1,000 cc or less (by which only Maruti's 800 cc engine qualifies), while a graded scale of excise duties once again benefited Maruti more than any other manufacturer.

"This is not particularly favourable treatment. In many other industries, the duty level for new projects is much lower. Even when the existing manufacturers started producing cars three decades ago, the tax levels were much lower than what we are now asked to pay."

—a spokesman for Maruti Udyog

Industry sources estimate that the new duty structure will make a price difference of between Rs 25,000 and Rs 30,000 per car in the case of the new models. Maruti, which without the duty concessions would have had to charge Rs 70,000 (not much less than the price of the existing models), would now be able to offer an ex-factory price of around Rs 45,000. In contrast, Hindustan Motors had been hoping to offer its new model at around Rs 1 lakh, but might have to hike its selling price to Rs 1.3 lakh in the absence of a duty benefit.

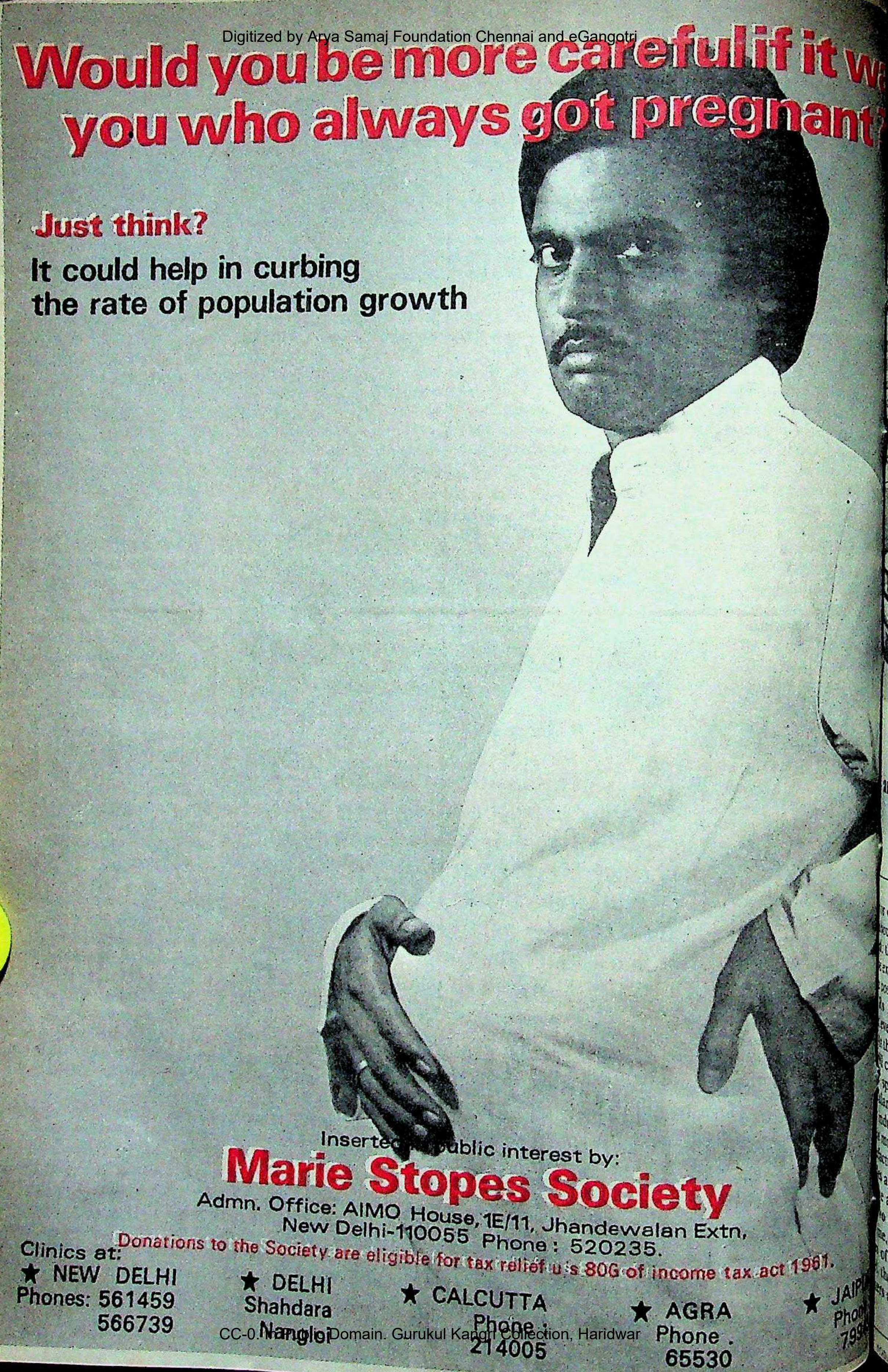
Commenting on the discriminatory duty structure, Vinod Doshi, chairman of Premier Automobiles, said: "This is a positive disincentive for existing units to upgrade their engines and effect fuel economies. Even if we are to offer 30 km per litre of petrol, we can hope for no relief as long as our engine is over 1,000 cc."

Doshi points out that engine size is of no consequence in framing fuel efficiency norms, since this efficiency has to be measured in the context of the vehicle's load-bearing capacity. Hindustan Motors claims, in fact, that its new car with the 1,600 cc Isuzu engine will give 21 km per litre of petrol at a steady speed of 60 km, while the Government prescribes only 20 km per litre for the 1,000 cc class. The company's 1,800 cc diesel engine is claimed to do even better: 29 km per litre at a steady speed. But neither model will get any tax benefit.

Discrimination: No one in the industry doubts that the new duty structure is designed specifically and with the sole purpose of boosting Maruti's stock in the car market, to everybody else's disadvantage. At a press conference soon after the budget, Finance Ministry officials were hard put to justify the discrimination.

But in an effort to undo the damage, Hindustan Motors President S.L. Bhatter flew to Delhi to hand in a strong protest, pointing out that medium sized cars had a genuine role to play—Maruti's small cars could not meet a variety of customer requirements. Premier officials meanwhile were sending out feelers to other manufacturers to start a concerted campaign, and the Association of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (AIAM) was meeting in Bombay in mid-March to organise a protest.

The discrimination practised in cars has been repeated in two-wheelers, but more subtly. Fuel efficiency for two-wheelers has



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ecified by three engine sizes, but the nsumption standards are so stringent ake it well nigh impossible for most ers to take advantage of the new con- al duties. One manufacturer, Escorts, ayed the introduction of its new 350 orcycle by a year in the hope of g in on reduced duties. Escorts's has greater fuel efficiency than equivalent and even smaller engine gets no benefit because it can't deli- stipulated 50 km per litre. Result: it Rs 21,500 instead of Rs 18,500.

NICALLY enough, Maruti itself is ppointed with the new duty struc- the company had been expecting er excise and customs levies. Last , company officials were redoing cing sums before opening bookings new car from late March. A Maruti r confessed that the car would now ut Rs 5,000 more than had been ex- the new price of around Rs 45,000 xclusive of local sales tax, transpor- osts and so on. The final cost will be Rs 50,000—in some places the figure en nudge Rs 55,000.

this level, virtually half the car price consist of duties and taxes, and the spokesman pointed out: "This is not arly favourable treatment. In many dustries, the duty level for new pro- uch lower. Even when the existing cturers started producing cars three ago, the tax levels were lower than are now asked to pay."

o Classes: In an effort to hold the e, Maruti now plans to produce two of cars: an ordinary and a de luxe the latter fitted with radios, air-con- s and better carpets. As much as 15 per cent of production will be reserved for the de luxe models—whose price is as yet undecided—and the extra profits on these used to underwrite a part of the cost on the ordinary model cars.

Maruti officials also concede that it would have been better if the duty concession had been extended to all the manufacturers. "There can be no introduction of improved technologies and better models at the present duty levels. If the Government wants the other car producers to modernize, it will have to reduce duty," said the company spokesman.

The big question now is whether the private sector car companies will abort their plans, stopping short of making the heavy investment needed to go in for new engines. They have little choice on the question of new bodies. For one thing, much of the investment has already been made. For another, Hindustan Motors has been making do with ancient equipment, including worn out dies that are no longer able to press body panels into proper shape. Much of the plant machinery is so old that even spare parts are no longer available.

Deliberate Wait: If the current pattern of duty differentiation had been introduced two years earlier, it might at least have helped the industry to adapt its plans to tax policy. But the Government seemed to almost deliberately wait for the companies to commit themselves to larger cars before announcing its duty cut. One company spokesman recalled Industry Minister Narayan Dutt Tiwari's specific assurance at a meeting of AIMA last year that there would be no duty discrimination. Hindustan Motors decided on a new Isuzu engine only after this, and rushed the collaboration through in an effort to be on the road by the end of 1983, around the same time as Maruti.

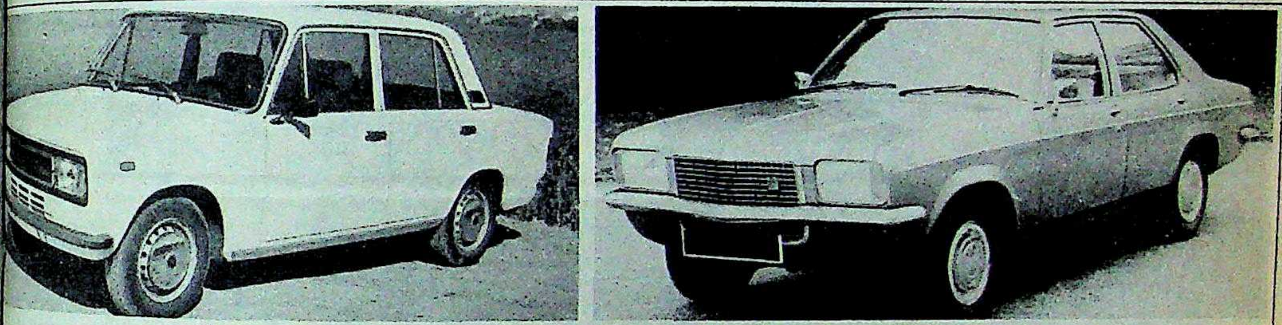
In contrast, Standard Motors, which seems to be planning for a 2,000 cc car (the largest which the industry will offer) does not seem particularly worried by duties. Managing Director C.V. Karthik Narayanan said the company plans a production run of just 3,600 annually. "We don't anticipate a higher demand for such a potentially high-priced car."

Design Plans: Even Premier, whose present Padmini models might be affected most by the advent of Maruti, is planning to first have a larger body and then get a more powerful engine. Premier Chairman Doshi said this was because Indians seemed to be partial to larger cars. But Doshi as well as Standard and Hindustan Motors seem to have weighed the possibility of competing directly in the Maruti segment of the market and decided to concentrate their efforts elsewhere. The Government has now taken advantage of this and fashioned its duty structure suitably. The only company which did want to introduce a new small car—Escorts—was told privately not to apply.

But the manufacturers are hedging their bets. Hindustan Motors plans to produce half their cars with diesel engines—an effort to catch customers who want very low running costs. Premier too plans to dieselise. But the diesel cars will if anything cost even more than the new petrol models.

In essence, only Maruti seemed to be sitting pretty last fortnight, even if its cost calculations had been slightly upset. And with bookings due to start by the month-end, bets were being taken in the company's head office on the number of people who would queue up to book their vehicles. The guesses ranged from 60,000 to 2,50,000.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports



The new models to be introduced by Premier (left) and Hindustan Motors

> **"This is a positive disincentive for existing units to upgrade their engines and effect fuel economies. Even if we are to offer 30 km per litre of petrol, we can hope for no relief as long as our engine is over 1,000 cc."**
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> **—VINOD DOSHI, chairman, Premier Automobiles**

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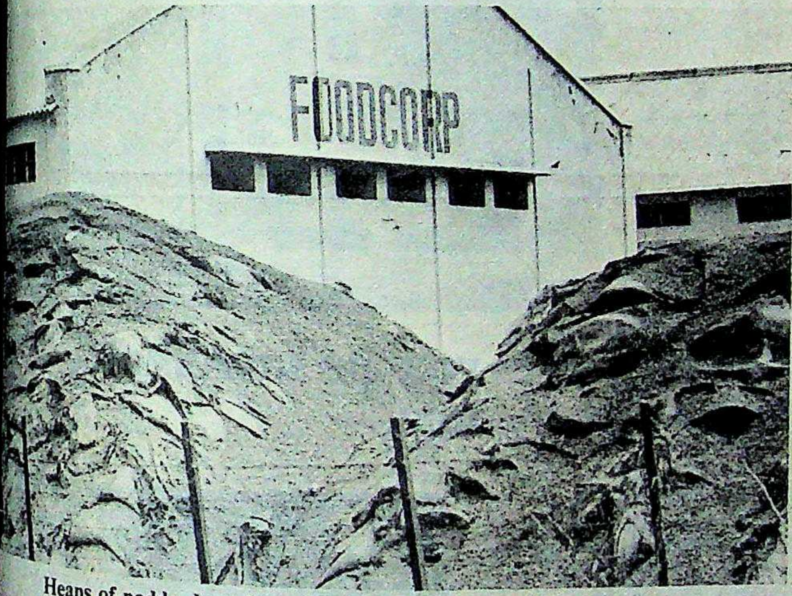
HILE India continues to import odgrains, vast quantities of wheat nd paddy procured by state agen- e Central pool lie rotting in Punjab. loss during 1979-82 is estimated to crore, including 2 lakh tonnes of d paddy—worth Rs 35 crore— s allowed to decay until it was no r for human consumption.

s year, the Punjab unit of the Food n of India (FCI) has declared over tonnes of paddy—worth Rs 15 hich has been accumulating since s unfit for human consumption. It be sold to poultry and cattle food Y.S. Rattra, senior regional FCI, admitted that "timely milling ve saved the paddy." But instead of d transferring the paddy, it was o accumulate. And the lack of storage facilities combined with gement resulted in the stocks



Heaps of paddy decaying at Rajpura: monumental neglect

y Losses: The Punjab State Co- Marketing Federation (MARKFED), major procurement agency, which being Asia's foremost cooperative annual turnover of over Rs 100 been suffering heavy losses since it paddy procurement three years g this period, it has suffered a loss crore. Harcharan Singh Hero, the airman of MARKFED and a ruling A, admitted that "total mismanagement was responsible for the losses. He The bureaucracy managing the (procurement) operation could not get the paddy milled in time. It allowed huge stocks to rot in the rains in the open yards. Once rice was declared of poor quality by the FCI, MARKFED was obliged to sell it in the open market and there again, a very selective group of buyers from Bombay and Madras was involved and hush-hush deals were struck."

Besides MARKFED, the state Food Department and the Punjab Civil Supply Corporation (PUNSUP) also procure foodgrains to feed the national distribution system. But they all suffer from a common malady: inadequate storage, inefficiency and corruption.

The Food Department procured 2 lakh tonnes of paddy in 1979-80. According to its Director, Gurbinder Singh Chahal, FCI had promised to lift this within five weeks. But instead of being collected, it lay rotting until nearly half of it became unfit for human consumption and was rejected by the FCI, resulting in a loss of over Rs 2 crore. Similarly, PUNSUP suffered a total loss of Rs 2 crore.

The FCI rejected 3.75 lakh tonnes of wheat procured by the three state level agencies for the Central pool, because having been soaked by rain at farms where it lay, it had lost its original quality and was categorised as 'grade two' wheat. "While FCI has pushed its own grade two wheat into the national distribution system, it refused to touch the same itself," complained C.D. Sheema, secretary, Food Department. "This wheat is being auctioned and over 1 lakh tonnes sold at Rs 180 per quintal." The buyers' syndicate is keen to purchase all such wheat for states facing a shortage of foodgrains, where prices are in the range of Rs 300 per quintal. The margin on rice is even greater since the retail price went up to Rs 7 per kg in Tamil Nadu, against Rs 2.80 or Rs 3 in Punjab.

Storage Problem: Yet another dimension to the grain distribution and storage problem is provided by the differences existing between the FCI and the state agencies. The FCI delays moving the crop procured by the agencies in favour of transporting its own. This results in heavy losses for the agencies, not only in terms of daily expenditure but also in terms of storage space. As the grains accumulate, the agencies have to resort to open storage, which often spoils the grain so that it loses its original quality and the FCI is reluctant to accept it.

In one case some months ago, the FCI rejected 2 lakh tonnes of paddy worth Rs 5.71 crore collected by the state agencies for FCI. As a retort, the state Government informally instructed the shellers to delay milling FCI's paddy. In one mandi, this even led to violence between FCI staff and Food Department officials. Ultimately, the FCI was forced to take its paddy to Haryana for milling. This resulted in a loss of Rs 60 lakh.

Reacting to the problem, Chief Minister Darbara Singh has ordered a probe into the "inordinate delay in shelling and disposal" of the paddy. And the FCI, faced with complaints of corruption, has been taking stringent action to curb such practices. Since Rattra took over as senior regional manager, 233 corrupt officials have been punished and several have been suspended from their jobs every month. But Rattra admits that even with all this disciplinary action, he has only touched the fringe of the problem. Meanwhile, domestic foodgrains continue to decay and imports increase.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

THE MARKETS

Slight Change

THE BUDGET does not seem to have made much difference as far as the share market is concerned. Some shares have gone up and some have come down but the net effect is marginal, which is not all that surprising, considering that the effect of the budget on the economy itself is expected to be no more than minimal. Normally it takes about two to four weeks for the impact of the budget to sink in, for a great deal of changes are in small type—clause this and subclause that—and it takes time for the lynx-eyed men in Dalal

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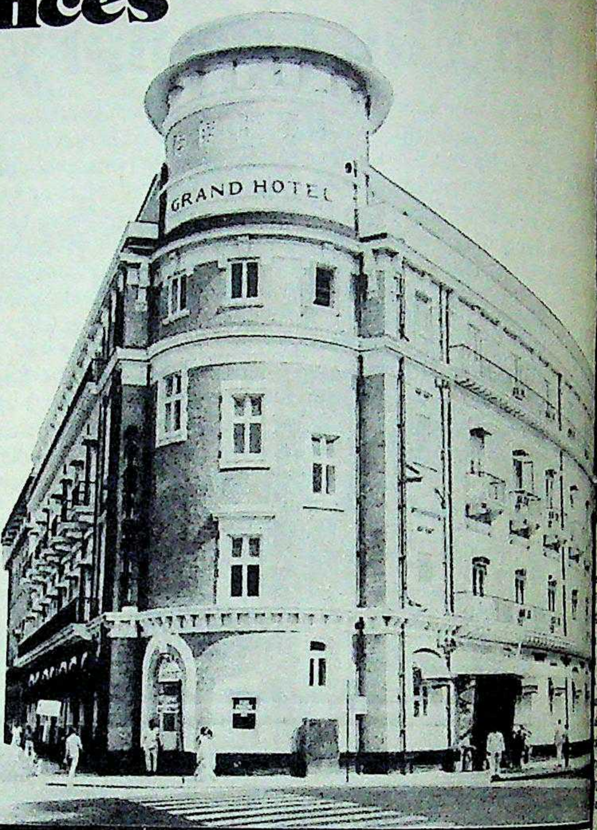

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	High	Low 1983	Close 3.3.83	Change on Fortnight
	17.75	14.00	14.50	nil
	36.50	33.50	34.35	(0.30)
	35.00	32.00	33.50	1.00
	406.00	358.00	370.00	(5.50)
	1,200.00	1,025.00	1,050.00	20.00
	42.80	40.00	40.50	(0.60)
	257.00	222.50	222.50	(5.00)
	54.60	47.60	49.00	0.30
	75.00	65.50	67.50	(1.50)
	28.20	27.20	28.20	0.20
	246.50	206.00	207.00	(2.00)
	202.50	195.00	202.50	2.50
	810.00	695.00	801.25	(8.75)
	57.50	51.00	56.50	5.50
	94.00	84.00	90.00	(0.50)
	53.25	32.31	52.75	11.56
	22.20	20.10	22.20	0.70
	22.00	20.75	21.12	(0.63)
	50.50	39.75	0.50	8.69
	31.50	23.50	25.25	1.25
	21.75	19.90	20.20	(0.10)
	490.00	441.50	456.00	9.00
	52.00	45.00	51.25	0.25
	38.75	32.10	38.75	2.15
	56.50	53.00	55.25	nil
	35.10	28.70	31.42	(0.04)
	20.00	18.10	18.40	0.30
	23.00	21.80	22.00	(0.05)
	25.70	22.10	25.60	1.55
	32.00	25.50	32.00	5.75
	34.50	31.30	34.00	(0.10)
	87.00	82.00	83.00	(1.00)
	44.85	36.00	37.50	(3.00)
	28.10	20.35	27.00	6.25
	57.50	35.90	35.90	(14.60)
	85.00	68.00	78.00	8.00
	87.00	78.00	84.00	3.00
	65.40	57.30	60.40	3.10
	163.00	75.00	83.00	7.00
	24.00	23.00	23.50	0.10
	56.00	53.00	55.00	nil
	16.20	14.20	15.70	(1.10)
	60.25	42.50	51.75	2.25
	22.60	19.50	21.75	nil
	56.00	46.00	48.50	1.50
	26.19	22.69	25.00	1.50
	257.50	247.50	247.50	(8.00)
	24.00	21.75	22.00	(0.50)
	26.00	21.75	23.00	1.25
	207.50	180.00	185.00	2.50
	39.25	37.50	39.00	0.50
	47.10	41.10	41.90	(1.30)
	29.40	28.75	29.20	nil
	376.00	306.00	306.00	(4.00)
	32.00	27.50	32.00	4.00
	40.75	36.00	39.50	0.25
	183.00	162.00	171.00	(3.50)
	22.25	19.87	19.87	(1.12)
	39.05	35.25	37.60	nil
	32.12	27.75	30.81	(2.94)
	17.50	15.25	16.10	nil
	46.80	42.50	42.80	(0.20)
	67.00	54.00	59.00	2.00
	301.50	240.50	240.50	(12.00)
	455.00	392.00	392.00	(22.00)
	45.00	39.25	43.00	(1.50)
	18.00	16.00	17.90	1.00
	25.10	23.00	24.40	0.40
	24.80	22.90	23.00	1.10
	283.00	262.00	266.00	1.00
	19.50	15.00	15.50	0.50
	25.60	22.40	25.40	0.70
	13.80	13.60	13.80	0.20

Street and Lyons Range to add it all come up with the kind of answers most investors are apt to ask.

The initial reaction is one of benign indifference, the Government going one way and the share market another, but the budget is certainly not hostile to business and industry—as was Charan Singh's budget exercise four years ago—and this is always a plus point where the market is concerned.

The budget announcement has also coincided with the release of reports of a number of companies who seem to have done quite well. Indian Explosives, for instance, has doubled its gross profit from Rs 12 crore to Rs 24 crore and net profit before tax from Rs 7 crore to Rs 12 crore.

Fears about the new levy of a minimum tax on company profits are almost certainly misplaced. Firstly, the proposed amendment is to take effect from April 1, 1984, and a lot can happen before that. Secondly, there is always the possibility of the finance minister relenting and reducing its severity.

The levy seems to have been interpreted differently by different companies. While Telco shares are down, albeit slightly, the shares of Reliance are up, though both are more or less in the same boat. It will take some time, possibly two or three months, before all such wrinkles are ironed out and until then the ups and downs in the market should be dismissed as so much froth.

Steady Growth: A number of scrips are quoted ex-bonus which is always a good time to buy them. There is, for instance, Blow Plast which is a growth company and a good buy. There is also J.K. Synthetics whose shine has worn off a little as the management has suddenly become rather conservative after all those bonus issues in a row. Another company in the same boat is Kinetic Engineering which also seems attractive. There are still others—Western India Erectors is one—the main attraction being their low price immediately after ex-bonus quotation.

The budget may or may not be inflationary—government officials are so uncertain they do not know what to say—but it is almost certain that prices will rise much more than they did last year. A little inflation is always good for the share market, for it is good for profits. Actually, last year was not all that good for the market mainly because prices were under control.

If the next kharif crop is not too bad, and prices rise by about 5 or 6 per cent (that is, twice as much as they did last year), the share market should be up and away. Industry's fears about this levy or that should not be taken too seriously. Good companies will continue to make profits and add to their reserves, and when all is said and done, that is all that matters.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	8.6142	8.4830
Austria	100	As Sch.	59.4280	58.7719
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.4624	26.2633
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.5424	41.2298
Canada	1	Can $	8.1980	8.1059
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.0580	11.9673
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4701	1.4527
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5087	1.4932
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4287	1.4180
Iran	100	Rial	11.8000	11.7112
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7167	0.7089
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.2109	4.1616
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7756	0.7677
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.3442	34.0858
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.3750	4.3281
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.9039	0.8971
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7543	0.7487
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.7693	3.7272
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7897	0.7807
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8020	4.7499
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.6623	7.5839
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4388	0.4355
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3454	1.3296
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8733	4.8179
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0364	1.0286
Thailand	100	Baht	43.6438	43.2473
UK	1	Pound	15.0353	15.8987
USA	1	US $	10.0400	9.9025
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7287	2.7082
USSR	1	Rouble	13.7582	13.6547
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1757	4.1296

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on March 9, 1983.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
PRICES		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
March 3, 1983	**255.3**	0.9
Cereals	**270.3**	6.1
Chemicals	**382.8**	39.2
Industrial Fibres	**179.7**	8.3
Metals	**350.1**	5.4
Sugar	**195.5**	4.5
Textile Yarns	**217.4**	(1.9)
Vegetable Oils	**292.8**	(7.2)
Gold, standard,		
March 3, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	**1,780.00**	5.00
Silver, .999		
March 3, 1983 (Rs per kg)	**3,290.00**	(90.00)
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
March 1, 1983	**240.2**	4.9
Cement	**233.3**	2.2
Chemicals	**210.0**	2.2
Engineering	**402.0**	14.5
Fertilisers	**213.9**	6.8
Man-made fibres	**368.5**	(0.9)
Paper	**466.9**	6.9
Rubber Goods	**160.9**	4.1
MONEY		**per cent**
Money Supply, January 28, 1983		**1.8**
Bank Deposits		**2.0**

*1969–70 = 100

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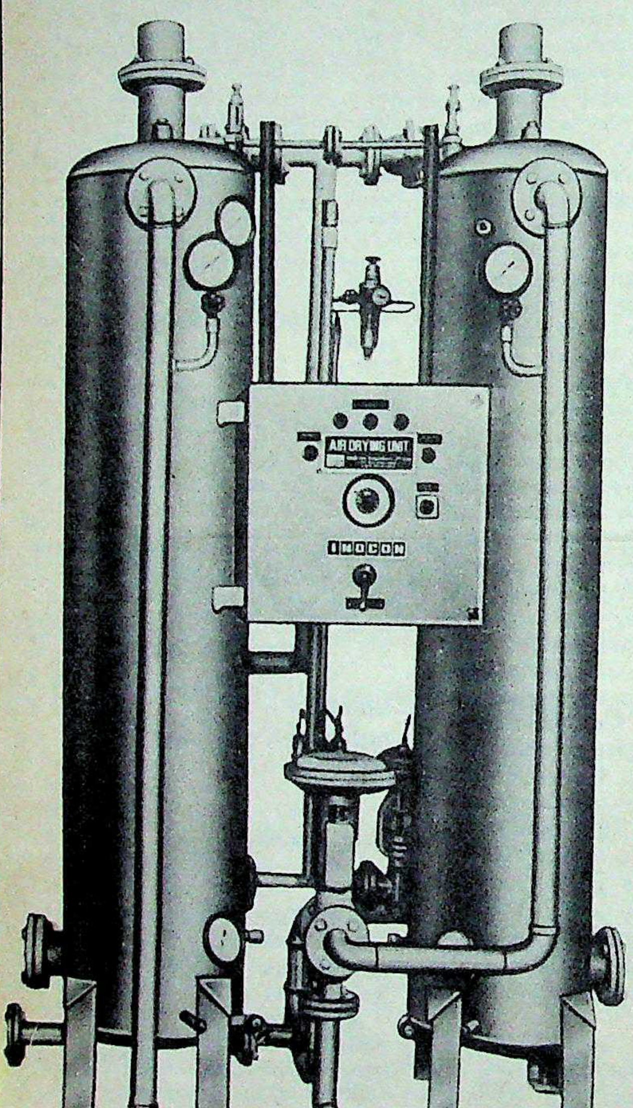

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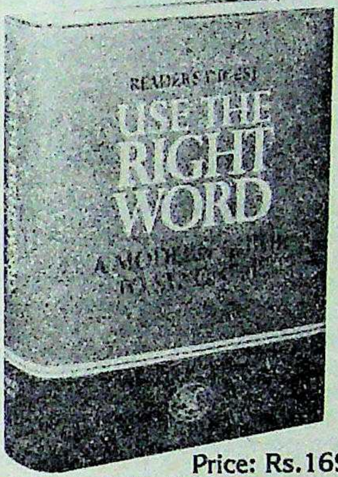

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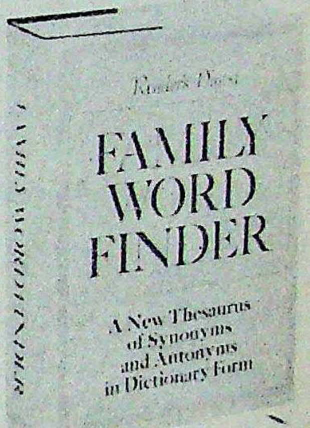

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GOVERNMENT

ceptions To The Rule

SNARLS of bureaucracy twist
the simplest of rules. The latest
is the prime minister's Februa-
which asked that all senior
government officials—including
with public sector underta-
extension of service after retire-
the completion of their five-
at the Centre, and those
after retirement, should be
leave or sent back to their states.
by last fortnight, only seven
secretaries, nine of 24 joint
and 15 of 42 directors and deputy
were asked to leave. What is
officials of over a dozen public
takings and half a dozen offi-
abroad—all affected by the or-
not touched. In fact it seems as if
's fiat was used to get rid of a
cials who had earned the wrath
and bureaucrats
enjoy the confidence
jang Road.

Ousters: In the
Railway Board
Mohinder Singh
Central Coalfields
Director Baldev
were unceremoni-
in a telling com-
the misuse of the

had the dust settled after the
Gujral episodes than another
Jagdish Chand, chairman, Cen-
of Direct Taxes (CBDT), even as he
notifications following the
budget proposals. Chand was on
until July 31, but he was verbally
a top Finance Ministry official to
Chand's sudden departure was
since he had received a nine-
sion quite recently. Instead Insi-
that he was ousted because of
come tax raids on some well
business houses.

Chand was ousted, other chiefs
were still in the saddle.
among them:

Krishnamurthy, vice-chairman of
Udyog Limited, who got a year's
till January 13, 1984. Krishna-
a come-back despite the fact
removed from both Bharat
icals Limited and later on from
Ministry in controversial
ces;

Sahni, chairman, Central Board of
and Customs who is also on
a two-year extension till October 1984;

► S.N. Rai, chairman of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and B.N. Bose, member, CEA—both on temporary extension;

► Takht Ram, the powerful joint chief controller of imports and exports who completed 58 years on May 31, 1981. After securing two-year extension he is due to retire by May 1983. No reasons were given for their continuance despite the directive.

The prime minister's orders were also applied with some discrimination at the additional secretary level. Seven additional secretaries will return to their state cadres by April 30. They are: K.B. Seshadri of the Personnel Department; Kusum Lata Mittal and S.V.S. Juneja of the Economic Affairs Department; S.L. Sharma, chief commissioner, Andaman & Nicobar Islands; B.R. Patel, secretary, Union Public Service Commission; S.P. Gugnani and C. Venkatraman of the Commerce Ministry. All had completed more than five years at the Centre.

In fact it seems as if Mrs Gandhi fiat was used to get rid of a few top officials who had earned the wrath of politicians and bureaucrats claiming to enjoy the confidence of 1 Safdarjang Road.

But over half a dozen other additional secretaries who had come to the Centre before 1978 were not touched:

► K. Saigal, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) official of the Assam and Meghalaya cadre, and additional secretary in the Oceanography Department, which is looked after by the prime minister herself, is with the Central Government since February 2, 1977;

► R.N. Chopra, IAS, from Madhya Pradesh, and additional secretary in the Industrial Development Department, joined the Central Government on October 8, 1976;

► P.K. Kathpalia, an IAS official from Punjab, and additional secretary (judicial) also joined the Central Government on January 3, 1975;

► R.K. Kaul, an IAS official of the Uttar Pradesh cadre and additional secretary (banking) is on deputation to the Central Government since June 5, 1976;

► M. Pancheppa, an Indian Revenue Service official and additional secretary in the Atomic Energy Department under the prime minister, came on deputation to the Central Government on December 13, 1973. He was promoted as additional secretary on March 10, 1978.

The subjective application of the directive has provoked a sense of insecurity among senior bureaucrats. Said a senior official of the Finance Ministry: "We don't mind transfers if these are done irrespective of the people involved. If we are sure that all of us would have to leave after completing our term we can plan our life accordingly. But when some people are left out it creates a lot of dissatisfaction and unhealthy trends in the bureaucracy."

In fact, the transfer of senior officials is considered to be a punishment because after reversion to their states they find it difficult to get reasonable accommodation and school education for their children. A senior IAS official who has been transferred to Rajasthan admitted that he will have to pay a monthly rent of Rs 1,000 out of his Rs 2,200 take home salary. In Delhi he has a three-bedroom government accommodation for Rs 300 only.

Mass Shifts: The Government, however, was more even-handed when applying the directive at lower levels. It decided to send back all the 22 officials, from joint secretary to under-secretary, who were on extended tenure. According to a Home Ministry decision, a number of joint secretaries who were given extension beyond April 30, 1983 will now be reverted to their states by the same date.

The transfer of joint secretaries has attracted the most attention: they include V.S. Tripathi of the Prime Minister's Secretariat, who is one of the nine joint secretaries asked to report to their state Government by May 1, although he was on extension until September 1983. The others are V.S. Ailawadi, former Delhi Development Authority vice-chairman and now joint secretary (labour); S. Chakravarty (company affairs); S. Ghosh, former special assistant to Vasant Sathe; R. Padmanabhan, registrar general and census commissioner; A.C. Tiwari (economic affairs); S.L. Varma, chairman, Kandla Port Trust; and Shrimani Sharma, development commissioner.

After the ouster of Tripathi—if he is unable to get further extension—along with R. Rajamani, another joint secretary in the prime minister's office, a third phase of shuffles is expected next month. According to reports, Mrs Gandhi will shift over a dozen secretaries and heads of public sector undertakings. The changes are supposed to ensure efficiency but there is so far no sign of this happening.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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e Price Of Honesty

oft-proved adage in New Delhi does not pay to be too honest if rk for the Government of India. has been driven home time and annals of the bureaucracy. Now of Nihal Singh, a junior em- the Ministry of Works and For 24 years Nihal Singh, whose exceptional devotion to duty mmended by successive officers, broiled in a seemingly unending nst a government that has relent- ed him with every weapon in its ventually issuing orders for his retirement.

appealed against the order and moved Justice S.B. Wad of the Court to remark in a judgement Singh's case recently: "Why does al court misery, privation and uphold justice? A just man has to better deal than a cup of hem- d went on to order Singh's rein- but the Government has chosen unmoved and last fortnight told that it would appeal against the 's order.

Singh's troubles with the Land nt Office (LDO) began way back on after he reported to the autho- he had been offered a bribe by a D.N. Sodhi, the attorney of a Kong businessman. Singh said ed him to arrange for additional les for a plot in Connaught Place at the old rates, resulting in a saving. A trap was laid by the Sodhi was arrested on December hile he was reportedly handing to Singh. The bribe money was in the treasury.

sion Ordered: The very next day as handed over to Harinder Singh -corruption squad. But Harinder ad of pursuing the case against more intent on unearthing evi- would prove that Nihal Singh was witness. On January 31, 1959 es from Nihal Singh's office. Two on February 14, 1959, the police Singh's house searched. this failed to yield results, some were seized from his office. The day two FIR's (first information re filed against Nihal Singh on of an oral statement by another the Hong Kong businessman. promptly acted on and on March h was suspended. followed was a bizarre tale of bureaucratic intrigue, with the might of a government compounding the misfortunes of a single individual. It took 11 months for the suspension order to be revoked but the harassment continued unabated. One part of the government machinery would lodge a complaint against Singh, followed by penal action, while another part of it would strike down the orders.

Cases which had little or no bearing on him were used to launch disciplinary inquiries; four years after his ordeal began, Works and Housing Joint Secretary Prem Kishen was moved to observe: "There is something in Nihal Singh's plea that the attorney accused of bribery and his friends have done everything possible to harass him."

HARI OM GULATI

Nihal Singh: fighting a corrupt system

Kishen, unfortunately for Singh, was replaced by a less sympathetic official. Singh's increments had been stopped; meanwhile, Kishen moved to another job and his successor in 1964 felt that since Kishen's remarks (which were made in May 1963) did not amount to a complete exoneration, Singh was not entitled to retrospective redress. Singh appealed once again and won his case five years later, in July 1969, when his original suspension order was found to be wholly unjustified.

He was awarded full pay and allowances, but a warning was issued. It was not till 1973—a full 15 years after Singh's first brush with the authorities—that he was fully exonerated, and his record cleared of the contrived black mark.

This finally cleared the way for Nihal Singh's promotion to the superintendent's grade, though he should in the normal course, have already been in a much higher position. Unfortunately the tussles of earlier years had not taught him that discretion was more appreciated in the LDO than honesty. Once back at his desk as superintendent, he diligently began suggesting methods to plug revenue leaks. In some 26 files relating to leased properties he discovered revenue leaks of around Rs 43 lakh. The files were forwarded to the ministers then concerned—I.K. Gujral and D.P. Chattopadhyaya—who suggested that Nihal Singh's suggestions should be followed up.

Final Blow: Nihal Singh quickly reaped the reward for his diligence. On May 31, 1973, the LDO's disciplinary officer K.K. Gamkhar cancelled Singh's retrospective promotion, even though six months had passed since the last ruling by the appellate authority. He censured Singh, stopped his increments and issued him a warning. While Singh was appealing this fresh turn of events, a final blow was struck on October 5, 1976 whereby he was retired in the public interest, nine years before his due date.

It was in December last year that Justice Wad, looking into the case, dug into the details and gave his unqualified judgement in Singh's favour. Declaring that "the vested interests of the lessees and the officials in the LDO are in league", Wad also called for Singh's immediate reinstatement with retrospective effect, and added that he should be given all promotions that had been unjustly denied to him. This, he said, "would be the only chance for the administration to redeem public trust in the system".

It will take more than that to right the wrongs done to Nihal Singh. The travails of the last few years have reduced his family to penury and his children have had to be taken out of private schools and placed in municipal schools as he could not carry the burden of paying their fees. He has also had to sell his house in Jangpura because he could not pay his loan instalments. Nihal Singh has even had to defend himself in the long courtroom battles as he could not afford the lawyer's fees. Even now after all these years, Nihal Singh's principled stand has not been vindicated—the Government is appealing against Justice Wad's verdict.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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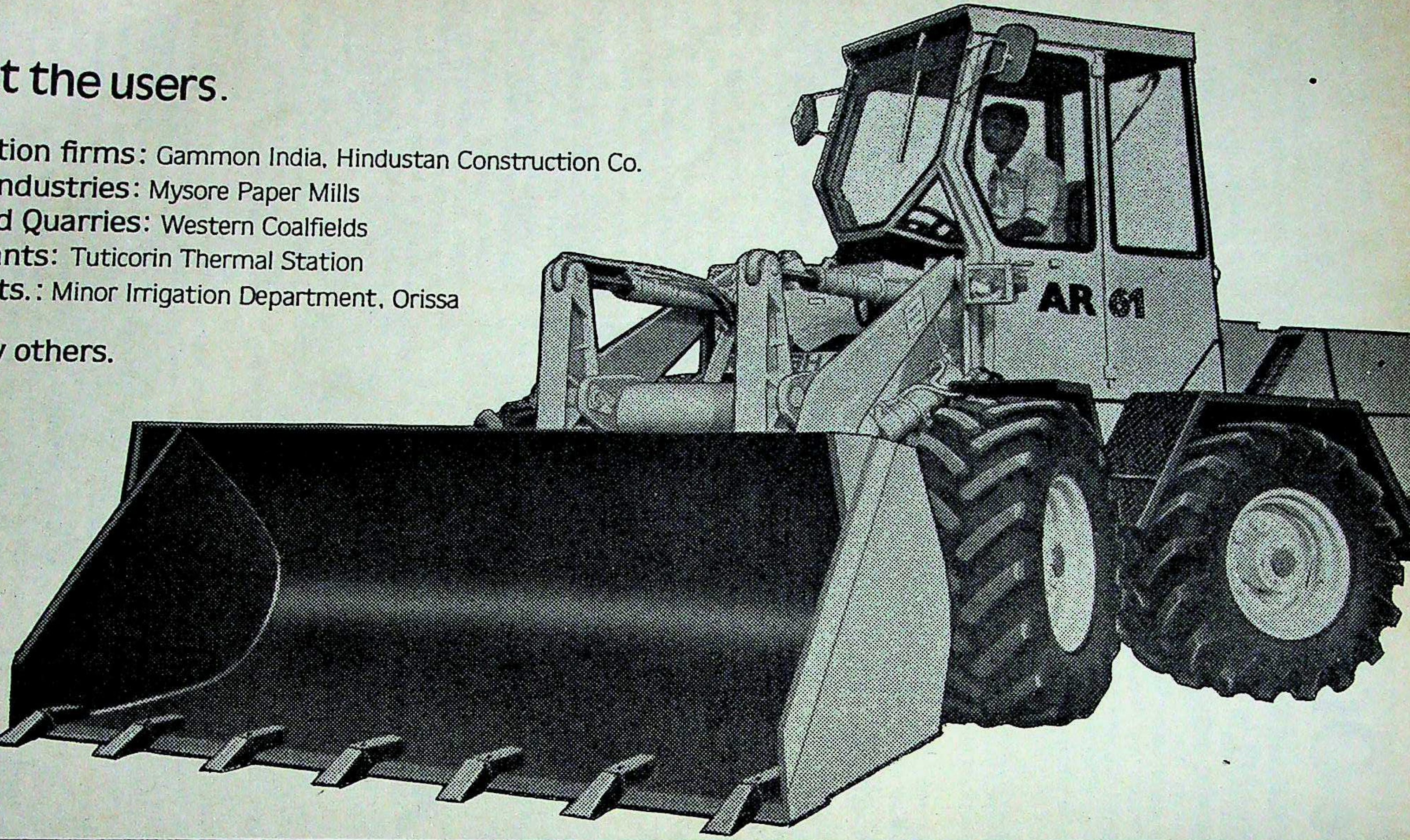

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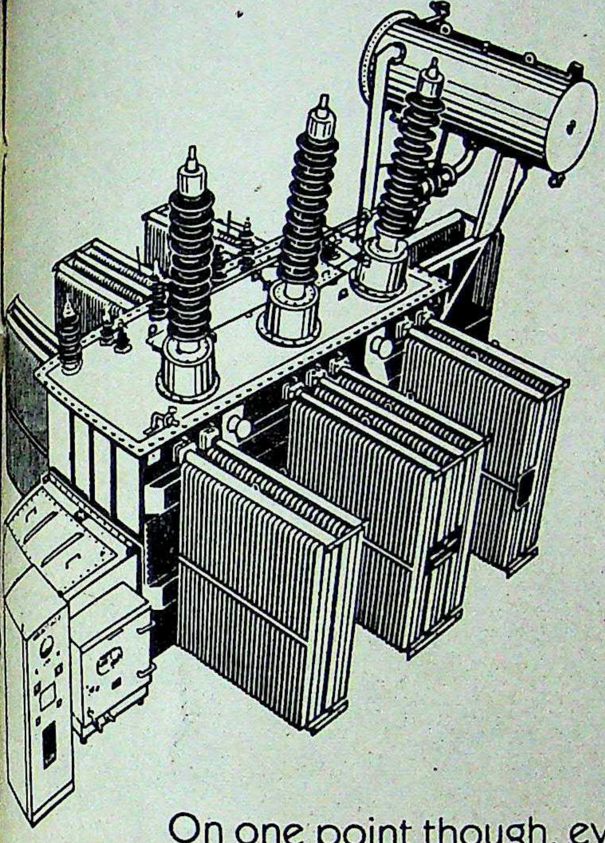

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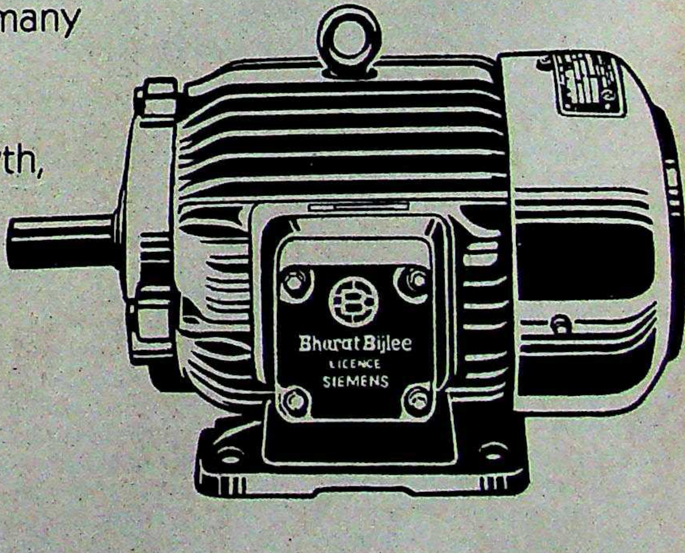

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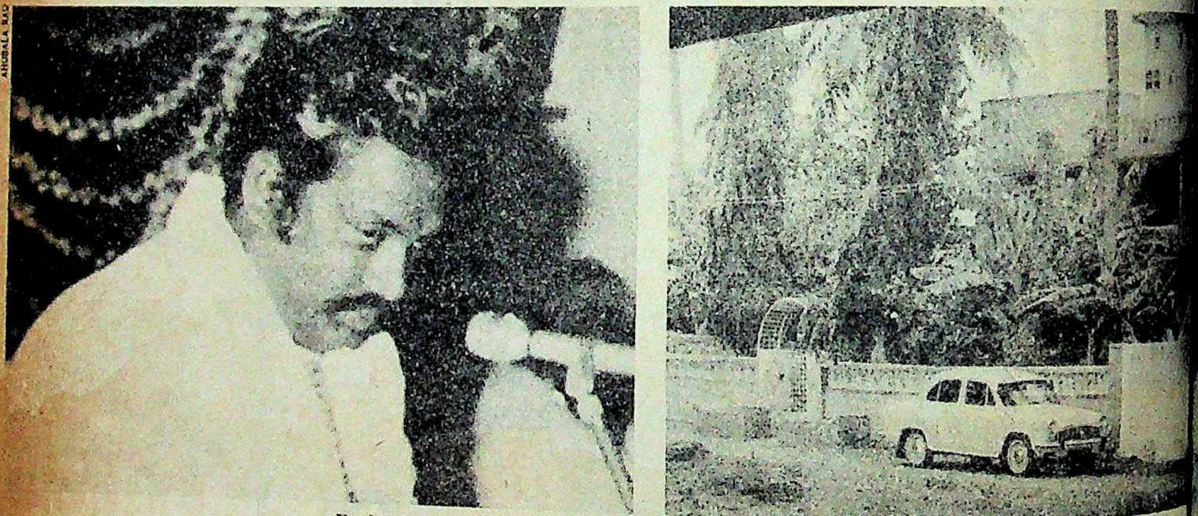
ANDHRA PRADESH

Striking At Corruption

HIS FIRST attack in the war against corruption was aimed at a lowly sub-registrar, the same post he had occupied 30 years ago before switching to films. Last fortnight, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao flagged off the anti-corruption crusade by asking the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Additional Director V. Appa Rao to throw the book at Sub-Registrar Dayyala Prabhakar Rao, 41, in Vijayawada. Working with allegations gathered by V. Ramachandrudu, deputy superintendent of police, ACB, Vijayawada the two officers and 20 inspectors raided four places on February 26 and unearthed assets worth Rs 24.65 lakh. Documents revealing Prabhakar Rao's business links and benami holdings were found and these suggest that he may have collected up to Rs 1 crore.

The registry offices, where property deals and marriages are legalised, have long been hot-beds of corruption, and as news of the raid spread, the offices of the chief minister and the ACB were flooded with congratulatory mail. Some writers gave details of the money they said they had paid Prabhakar Rao. Documents that are to be legalised show amounts far less than what actually change hands and any enterprising official can get his cut, as Prabhakar Rao is alleged to have done. Says Appa Rao: "His salary as sub-registrar over the years totals about Rs 1.5 lakh and would come to perhaps Rs 3.5 lakh by the time he retired. It is apparent that his assets are higher than his legal sources of income."

Big Assets: The eldest of seven children, Prabhakar Rao is believed to have amassed the wealth without letting his relatives know; in fact, according to one of the investigators who raided the sub-registrar's rented appartment and two-storey bungalow in Vijayawada and his home and a fertiliser shop in Bapulapadu village 30 km away, Prabhakar Rao's main worry was that if enquiries were made with the relatives they might stake their claim. After all, no one would sniff at eight house sites in Vijayawada, about 30 acres of land in three villages, a plan for a cinema theatre in Eluru town—a sister is the sub-registrar there—and about 100 acres leased for breeding fish in tanks. He is also stated to possess a lorry, an Ambassador car, a motorcycle, a tractor, a moped and have a dealership in fertilisers.



AHUBALA RAO

Prabhakar Rao (left) and his house in Vijayawada: immense assets

Besides this, ACB officials found fixed deposit receipts for Rs 1,43,600, gold and silver worth Rs 85,500, promissory notes worth Rs 35,000 and cash to the tune of Rs 55,484.65. Later, income tax officials seized Rs 40,000 from a locker in the Ayathirnagar house in Vijayawada. Investigators have so far established links between Prabhakar Rao and assets of about Rs 9 lakh so far and enquiries with benamidars and others may reveal the exact amount of the sub-registrar's assets in a fortnight.

Police sources allege that Prabhakar Rao was more open about his 'transactions' than most others and got away with it probably because of his political links in the Congress(I). Names mentioned in this context are former minister Koneru Ranga Rao and former revenue minister Janardhan Reddi. Says a former district collector: "He even managed to have transfer orders withdrawn with the help of his po tors." He had a room reserved bad hotel and shuttled between and the state capital by air, al ticket in different names. Said gator: "He was bold and cool raid, perhaps confident of clear all charges. He said there were tax officers and engineers wh bigger amounts and claimed th what little he may have collected the higher-ups."

Cumbersome Rules: The AC in bringing Prabhakar Rao's bo was almost thwarted by rules whi enquiries can be made only if the gives the bribe makes a written co the target is a gazetted officer pr of the Government is necessary kar Rao's case there was no sp plaint but the Government ga special sanction to carry out the Rao has now decided to scrap th allow the ACB to investigate and own accord. Says Ramachandru a welcome step. But judges shou ter weight to original complai writing and sworn before a ma most often those who complain and we can get a rap on the k doing our job."

Meanwhile, Rama Rao's ca fered a bit of a set-back when deputy superintendents of poli Ramachandrudu retired, havin 55-year age limit. In addition, ment suspended several offici one IPS and two IAS officers. quiries into alleged irregularit the spate of letters flooding office should push the drive ag tion into high gear.

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erms Of Controversy

E EUPHORIA, unfortunately, n't last long. Hardly had the country's medical community finished ga “breakthrough” in the discovessible vaccine for leprosy, the cripse which infects more than 40 lakh han researchers testing the breakegan to send up warning balloons. rimonious debate has broken out Madras-based virologist N. Veera- who last July claimed to have d a method of culturing the leprosy an artificial laboratory medium, dian Council of Medical Research d other researchers unsuccessfully duplicate his findings.

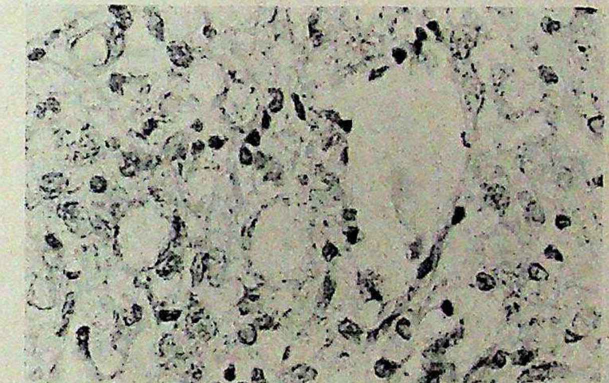
cally, at the same time a heated pted over a breakthrough claim by the Cancer Research Institute Bombay, which drew in leading microbiologists and lepro- the country. Reacting to the and the contradictory re- “breakthroughs” the Indian n of Leprologists (IAL) an- that both the claims were re” and were in need of con- testing and scrutiny before d be established.

ver, the importance of Vee- n's claim was that research sy was hampered by unavai- the bacillus, mycobacterium side a living body. Growing in an artificial laboratory ccessfully would facilitate and pave the way for the of an effective vaccine that could produced in a controlled environ-

lenge: Although Veeraraghavan cl- have grown the bacillus synthetic- h he said multiplied them, his re- been challenged in several medical Two medical experts—R. Prabha- puty director of the Tuberculosis Centre in Madras and V.M. leprologist and a senior research the Jalma Institute of Leprosy, o worked with Veeraraghavan for s last year on behalf of the ICMR, reported that contrary to the 's claims, there was practically no tion of leprae bacilli in his me- two experts felt that Veeraragha- n could be possibly due to a “sub- or in counting”. They couldn't y noticeable increase in the count rms even after several hours of servation.

Veeraraghavan was, however, quick to challenge the experts' verdict. He submitted that their conclusion wasn't acceptable as it was based “on examination of only a few smears”. He further alleged that the two experts had abruptly left his laboratory without entering into a discussion with him on their results and findings. The virologist didn't stop there. To offset the authoritative pronouncement of the ICMR, Veeraraghavan cited the renowned Canadian leprologist, Laszlo Kato, as having confirmed his findings after he had sent him—and other scientists—a parcel of his medium.

But, Dr Kato told an Indian daily that the growth of the bacilli was so small that it could have been a technical counting error. According to Kato, the multiplication of the bacilli should be much faster than in Veeraraghavan's medium for definite proof of successful culturing.



A magnified section of leprosy germs.

Veeraraghavan countered Kato's response by saying that when he had sent a sample of the synthetic medium to Kato, it was sent by ordinary post thus losing its effectiveness due to a temperature change. Said the soft-spoken Veeraraghavan, a little touchy after going through all the unpredictable whirlpools of the recent controversy: “If I had sent the parcel to Dr Kato in a thermos flask to maintain the right temperature (four degrees Centigrade), it would have been delayed at the customs, and that would have defeated the very purpose.”

Unprovable Claim: But quibbling about the temperature of the parcels in which Veeraraghavan mailed his medium to leprologists round the world is only of academic interest now, because the formula of composition of his medium has already been published in *Current Science*, an internationally indexed research publication of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. “Whatever the temperature requirements of the medium, the crucial question relates to the accuracy of the counting method Veeraraghavan adopted in claiming sixfold multiplication,” says Prabhakar, who found the virologist's claim unprovable. Veeraraghavan himself concedes that there is no foolproof counting method for the microscopic leprae bacilli, but claims that the mode of enumeration he adopted was weighted against him. Prabhakar, on the other hand, contends that the virologist's method of counting was cruder than the ordinary procedure.

A distinguished leprosy specialist of Madras, who prefers to remain anonymous, maintains that the manufacture of anti-leprosy vaccine will remain a far cry even if Veeraraghavan's claim of a sixfold multiplication of leprosy germs in his medium is correct. But this level of multiplication may be of use in identifying Dapsone resistant leprae bacilli. But the specialist has a significant question on another aspect of the breakthrough claim. Said he: “Leave aside the question of counting the leprosy germs, how are we sure that all the new organisms that are generated in the culture medium are mycobacterium leprae?” Veeraraghavan himself admits that it would involve very difficult tests while Gangadhar Sharma, deputy director, leprosy control, Tamil Nadu, and K. S. Sanjivi, project director of Voluntary Health Service (VHS) medical centre are wildly enthusiastic about Veeraraghavan's epochal breakthrough.

Leprologists, by and large, are yet to be fully convinced about the success in multiplication of leprosy germs. C.G.S. Iyer, a retired director of the Central Leprosy Training and Research Institute in Chingleput, south of Madras, said: “The standard criteria and prescribed formalities for the culture of microbiological organisms seem not to have been followed by Veeraraghavan.” Said IAL President N.H. Anita a leading leprologist of the country last fortnight: “You cannot short-circuit or jump to conclusions in science. It's a slow process whether you like it or not. Because of the exaggerated claims in the press we are finding it difficult to explain to leprosy victims and workers in the field that they can have no definite answers for the next few years, and then too there is no guarantee that a deliverable vaccine will be ready.”

Meanwhile the outright rejection of Veeraraghavan's “breakthrough” by the ICMR has unearthed a hornet's nest with claims and counter-claims being flung in all directions. And the debate is showing little signs of subsiding—at least till fresh claims and discoveries are provided and proved.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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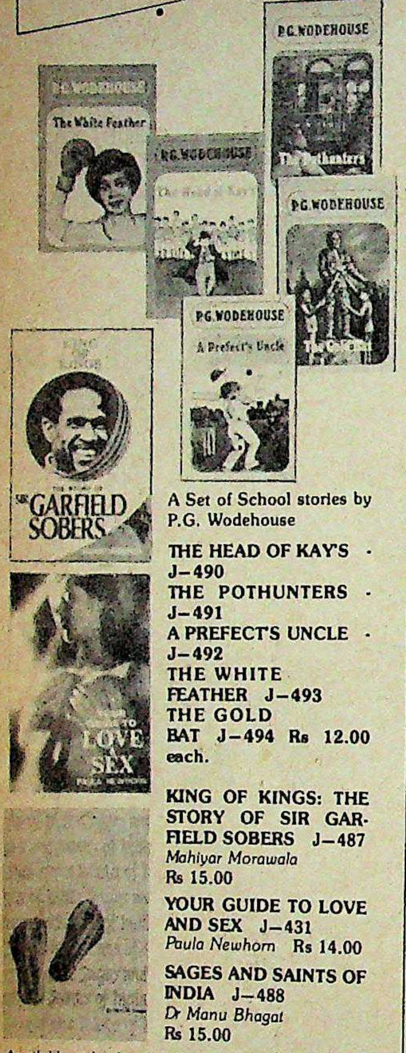

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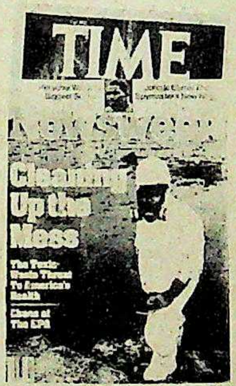
MAGAZINES

Holding Action

When the two international newsmagazines *Time* and *Newsweek* failed to appear on the stands in the first week of March in India, the media world discovered that the Government has a formidable array of weapons in its armoury to prevent unfavourable news from getting out. No formal orders were ever issued that the two magazines should be banned and there was never any suggestion of using the draconian Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Materials Act. Instead it was left to the customs to raise belated objections about the contents of both magazines.

Foreign periodicals are usually cleared within three hours by customs. But when the copies of *Time* (circulation: 27,000) and *Newsweek* (circulation: 15,000) arrived as usual at Bombay and Delhi airports between March 1 and 4, distributors India Book House (IBH) were told by customs to await further instructions. Both magazines were then subjected to an intensive scrutiny by customs in a manner that was unpleasantly reminiscent of the Emergency.



Incorrect Maps: Customs refused to admit it but the orders to delay the two magazines had come from the Home Ministry. Sources said that they were told to hold the magazines because they carried maps that did not show Jammu & Kashmir as part of India. But if this was the only reason for the ban, the Home Ministry was surprisingly well informed.

The orders to examine the magazines were sent to customs even before their arrival. They came, in fact, after the Home Ministry had been informed by the External Affairs Ministry that the March 7 issues of both magazines were not only carrying incorrect maps but also had lengthy articles on Assam. *Newsweek* in fact carried a 2,000-word story which laid the blame for the violence at Mrs Gandhi's door. The article commented: "The blood-bath was clearly a set-back for the prime minister.... with India's—and Gandhi's—prestige on the line on the eve of the Non-aligned summit in New Delhi, the world's largest democracy looked more unmanageable than ever."

Though the Home Ministry denied that the magazines had been banned the chronology of events makes it evident that the Government was intent on delaying them. For example, *Newsweek* arrived in Bombay on March 1 and *Time* on March 2. IBH was allowed to take the copies but wa not to distribute them. A day late given a stamp with the statemen map was "inaccurate and unaut was instructed to stamp every co circulation.

Both the magazines were o news stands on March 6—by whic next issue of both magazines was ted. Said Deepak Mirchandani, c IBH's import division: "There was *Time* and *Newsweek* but these we because of some problems about

Delaying Tactics: Delhi, ho treated differently. IBH's consig Delhi airport was not released eve company showed Delhi customs passed by their counterparts in Says Mirchandani: "We showe ped copies to the Delhi but they woul se our consignmen Bharat Jhulka, co Delhi customs: "We orders for the relea and *Newsweek* on Jhulka refused to c the delay and main was nothing illegal a damage, however, done. Said a senio "News is a perisha dity. If it is not c time, it dies aut

The two foreig were not the only ones to have problems last fortnight. Som INDIA TODAY and *Sunday* were b bulk at a few centres in New De has been able to identify the bu some time rumours circulated th been banned. The hotels where th for the Non-aligned summit wer not sell the magazines. Said a employee: "The orders were not p we did not expect a demand for

The bureaucratic dilly-d *Time* and *Newsweek* could not, media representatives in town, b If it was intended to keep A public focus during the summi ranged badly. Indian dailies lo writing up the episode and it wa of conversation at the NAM of conversation. Many delegations took the tro copies to the foreign newsmaga or obtained them through dip nels. It was, in a fortnight of ot handling of the media, an unsa

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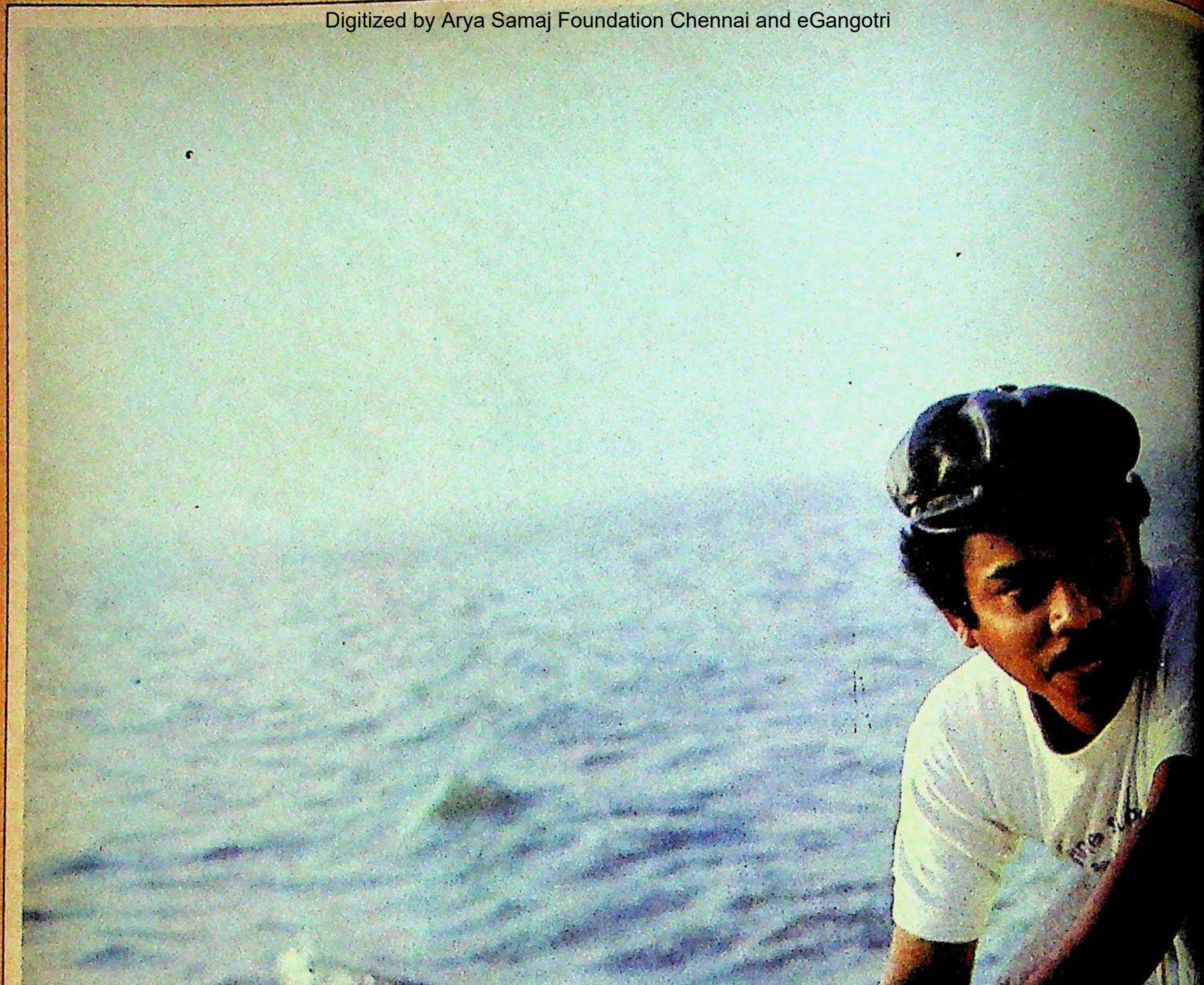

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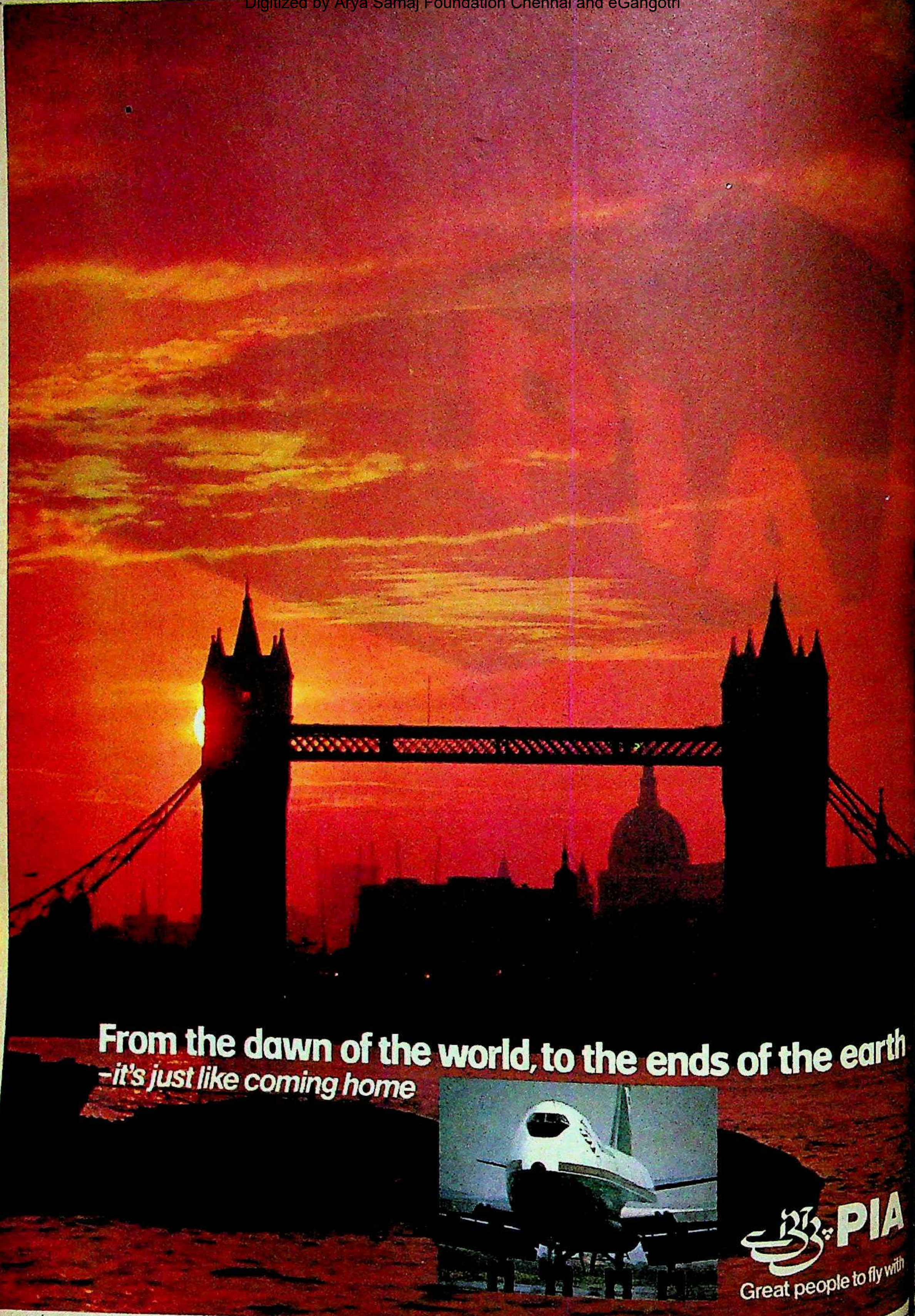
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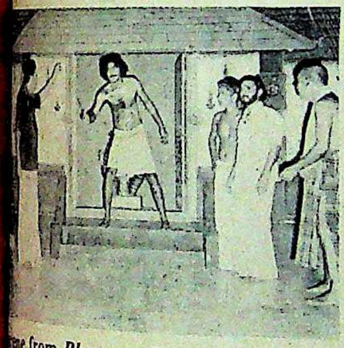
holy Row

STAGE director has done more to ad the message of communism in la than 59-year-old Thoppil director of several controversial winning plays. But Bhasi's latest effort *Bhagwan Kalumarunnu* s) has caused an unprecedented the state. The Hindu community mbrage at certain barbed references Ayyappa in the drama.

d Ayyappa in the drama. Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh Vishal Hindu Sammelan (VHS) made their objections known by lent demonstrations against the week a group alleged to be RSS stormed a theatre in Quilon. In galam in Ernakulam district the ollector stopped performances reatened to become a serious law r problem. Now the drama is full houses with heavy police pro-



ne from *Bhagwan Kalumarunnu*: controversial

ade: The Kerala People's Arts C) which is staging the play is the ama troupe in the state. It is also l wing of the Communist Party of), and over the last 32 years they d out 21 dramas on different social asi has directed 14 of these plays *Ningal Ene Communist Akee* (You a Communist) which went a long eading the gospel of the burgeonnist movement in the early '50s. owing has grown during the last as it has kept up its hard-hitting the social system. *Bhagwan Kalu-* keeps up the tradition—the play Kaniyapuram Ramchandran, a MLA, is a crusade against the comtion of religion. Says Ramchane want to expose the present system d is sold to millions in the name of

eme of the play centres around ng number of cases of idol lifting from temples. The play opens with a Muslim and a Christian bringing home an idol which they have stolen from a nearby temple. They have robbed the temple at the behest of the president of the VHS and the local temple chairman. But on reaching home the robbers find a live Ayyappa instead of an idol.

Bhagwan Kalumarunnu is a brilliant exposure of prevailing norms. There are snide references to Chief Minister K. Karunakaran's monthly visits to Guruvayoor. There are also mocking allusions to the vast offerings of sugar which Ayyappa says have made him diabetic. But the bit which has roused sentiments is the scene where Ayyappa says he has been born out of a homosexual union between Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. This shocks the Muslim who remarks 'Allah oh Allah'.

Offensive Scene: According to P. Parameswaran, the secretary of the VHS, that single scene offends the religious sentiments of the Hindus. Bhasi denies this charge saying: "As per the Hindu scriptures Lord Vishnu disguised as a girl kindles lust in the heart of Lord Shiva who later has a homosexual relationship with Lord Vishnu and they beget Lord Ayyappa." Bhasi also denies making references out of context. Adds M. Gopi, the KPAC secretary: "In fact we did some self-censoring after the play was staged initially and deleted some of the dialogues which were found objectionable by our friends."

Bhasi takes strong exception to the protest against his play. He feels that if the attack on the theatre is allowed to go unchallenged it would create a bad precedent. He adds that he never intended to denigrate the Hindu gods and points out that in his earlier plays *Ashwamedhom* and *Mooladhanam* he tried to expose superstitions in all religions including Islam and Christianity. Says Bhasi: "The church put an unofficial ban on my *Ningal Ene Communist Akee*. But they never threw stones on the stage like the RSS is doing today." Bhasi feels that the opposition to the play sprang up only after the Trivandrum riots. He says: "Before the Trivandrum riots we had staged the drama in about 100 places and there was no whimper of protest. We feel that this is an organised attempt at Hindu revivalism."

Bhasi also rejects outright the suggestion that the play should be performed before a committee of impartial judges. He says: "No writer or director, least of all me, could submit his work to such censoring." Instead he challenges the Hindu organistations to come out with their own play.

The controversy has inevitably done wonders for business. For the first time Bhasi is staging extra morning shows. And while the VHS may not like it, it looks as if this show will run and run. —SREEDHAR PILLAI

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"Spin me a weave, befitting my glory. That generations will live to tell its story". So cried the mighty Emperor a fortnight before his coronation and a motley band of weavers set to work to make what would become the Emperor's coronation robe.

And one by one each man returned, but the Emperor only waved them away. Until there came an old man with—the Emperor couldn't believe it—yes, a cloth of the purest gold that outshone the sun.

Running his fingers along the gold threads that had been woven into the cloth in a rich pattern of flowers and leaves, the Emperor triumphantly cried: "It shall be called kinqwab. And only kings shall don it".

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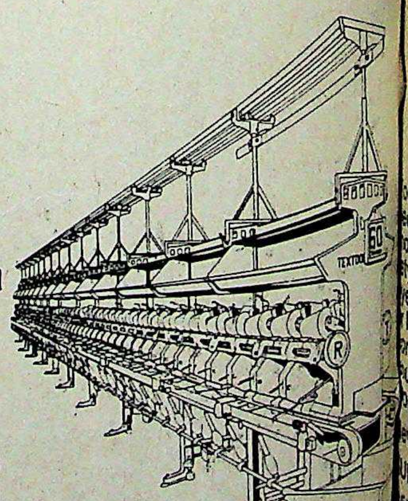

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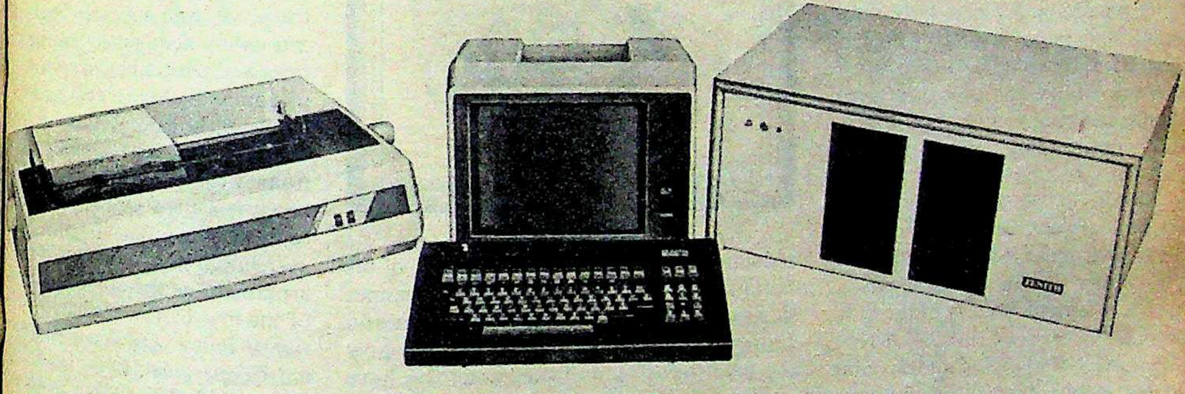

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MMA/ZC/9/82

NAM-Watching

IT IS no surprise that the seventh Non-aligned Movement (NAM) Summit has provoked scholars to produce a heap of books on non-alignment and its first cousin, the North-South syndrome. The presence of 3,000 delegates from a 100 non-aligned nations and a jostling crowd of over 1,000 mediamen create, or should create, an attractive clientele for a harvest of profiles of non-alignment.

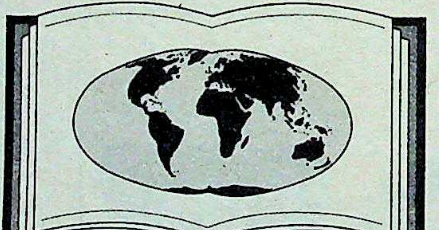
It is also a marvel that the intellectual crop harvested on the occasion of the NAM Summit is generally of a high order. Under review are two fat anthologies and three fairly slim single-author studies that grapple with a movement that has lost its gloss, and generates more doubts than confidence about its relevance. In addition, there are three books devoted to the ever-noncoming New International Economic Order which, by consensus, should occupy, but is yet to do so, the top place on NAM's agenda for the rest of the century.

Commendable Effort: Of the two anthologies, *Non-alignment: Perspectives and Prospects*, (New Delhi, Lancers Publishers, 1983; Pages: 309; Price: Rs 160) edited by U.S. Bajpai, a former secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, and now director of the India International Centre, has at least half a dozen outstanding contributions by Indian and foreign scholars or diplomats. Bajpai is indeed to be congratulated for being able, in a very short period of time, to collect 22 essays from as many contributors, amongst whom are such outstanding men as Soedjatmoko, Indonesian rector of the U.N. University in Tokyo, Mahbul-ul-Haq, Pakistan's minister of planning and development, and for a long time the well-known economic philosopher of the World Bank under McNamara's presidentship, and Felix Bandaranaike, former controversial finance minister of Sri Lanka. His Indian contributors are among the best and the brightest in the country, among whom one finds (inevitably) K. Subrahmanyam, P.R. Chari, A.K. Damodaran, M.S. Rajan, M.G.K. Menon, Nitin Desai and J.C. Kapur.

The authors all agree that non-alignment is caught in a web of crises and has lost its erstwhile sense of direction. They offer scintillating political-sociological explanations of NAM's astonishing spatial expansion accompanied by loss of cohesion and unity of purpose. But they also point out with obstinate objectivity the positive role NAM has played in the evolution of world politics since 1961 and the contributions it can still make to the supreme need of the present time: the creation of a New International Economic Order.

Felix Bandaranaike has written a factual history of NAM; Walter C. Clemens of Boston University has brought out some of the sharper contradictions in NAM, but is convinced that with all its shortcomings, it is likely to remain on the international scene "at least so long as superpower elephants threaten to trample the grass where lesser actors also graze".

Arms Control: Among the Indian contributors, Rajan rightly points out that the Western bloc's current attitude towards NAM is determined by the fact that the Soviet Union has at last acquired parity with the US in terms of "world-wide influence and military strength". P.R. Chari, in an excellent paper, shows that the need for disarmament has become more urgent for NAM. He also recommends steps NAM can take towards global and regional arms control and arms reduction. K. Subrahmanyam, in one of his best papers written so far, traces the changes in NAM to its increasing Africanisation and Latin-Americanisation. It also shows how the majority of non-aligned countries have become "more concerned about security issues which affect them in the immediate context, rather than global issues".



Compared to Bajpai's anthology, the one edited by Professor Kashi Prasad Misra of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is of an inferior quality. Certainly not because all its 36 contributors are Indian, but partly because the papers were written for a JNU seminar; few Indian scholars turn out their best in papers they write for seminars. *Non-alignment: Frontiers and Dynamics* (New Delhi, Vikas, 1982; Pages: 512; Price: Rs 150) begins with an inaugural paper by the doyen of Indian scholars in international affairs, A. Appadorai, who offers a Nehruvian profile of NAM and raises questions about its future without answering them. Professor Misra himself tries to "understand" non-alignment; he does not quite transmit understanding to his readers.

Professor Rajan is here less demanding of himself than he is in the Bajpai is haunted by a fear which doesn't non-aligned nations shall never be selves into a "third bloc", because adequately and permanently too do so.

Satish Kumar shows on the three case studies how non-align not served the practising nations effective "diplomatic strategy" at national security crisis, while K.P. S a well-documented paper, exposes aligned countries' failure to act as a the UN to influence the political the world today. J.K. Boral brings paradox that NAM was more success impact on world affairs before it was ly launched as a movement.

Historical Analysis: Rikhi *Non-alignment: Origins, Growth* *tial for World Peace* (New Delhi 1983; Pages: 214; Price: Rs 90) is best historical surveys of NAM to lished so far. After a distinguished the Indian Foreign Service, Jaipal since 1979 assistant secretary-gene UN at Geneva dealing with multila armament negotiations. His histori enables him to see NAM in a long zig frame of contemporary history; he intimately acquainted with the mics and contradictions of NAM. "T undoubtedly been a weakening of ment as a moral force in the concludes Jaipal. "It is no longer the tionary crusade for world peace it be; it is a tired movement badly in rejuvenation."

Jaipal wants NAM to put peace armament as the aim and this is of the first half of Shahul Hameed's *suit of Peace: On Non-alignment* *nal Cooperation*, (New Delhi, Vik Pages: 122; Price: Rs 95); the se tries to explore how the non-align could promote regional (South-S operation. Hameed is Sri Lanka's minister and was an active parti the New Delhi Summit. He writes ty and conviction and the path he moderate, perhaps a little too soft dustrialised countries of the North other pole is Hari Singh, a noted journalist, whose *India and the No* *World* (New Delhi, Vikas, 1983; Pa Price: Rs 75) blames the former powers and the US for "the plun poor", and projects 'mutual help' way that could lead the non-aligne World countries out of the trap of exploitation and subjugation. S writes about India's role in non- with a Tennysonian helping of adjectives.

Expectedly, a recurring theme

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all these five volumes like a thread is that restructuring the nomic order must be one of the s of NAM. This alone lends some ificance to the three books on th" we shall now briefly review.

Bandopadhyaya of Jadavpur has come out with two books, one the other, which deserve wide and ading. *North Over South* (New Asian Publishers, 1983; Pages: ously written book that spells amental requirements of a new mic and political order.

s a "non-Western perspective of al relations". He first explains lism reduced the South to political and economic servitude and isation has plunged the world se, pervasive class-race struggle. s book, Bandopadhyaya tries to e inner strength of the South. He ference diplomacy", and calls for ggle by the South" at every al forum and in the "battlefield" commerce and politics. And yaya is no Marxist but essendhian who wrote an interesting e study of Gandhi and Mao.

cond volume, *Climate and World Inquiry into the Natural Cause of pment* (New Delhi, South Asian 1983; Pages: 276; Price: Rs 80) is g study in India of climatic facffect economic development. It xplanation that the one possible e economic disparity between the the South lies in the advantages of rate climate in the North and the ges of the tropical climate in the

etical Interpretation: Soumitra *Development Strategy and Developing Countries* (New Delhi, South Asian 1983; Pages: 212; Price: Rs 85) els and strategies of economic depreceded by an illuminating theorpretation of economic underde. Professor Sharma has been at the versity in Yugoslavia since 1970 chairs its Department of National . Naturally, his theories, models gies are larded with Yugoslavia's ntal experience. However, a great at he offers appears to be eminentle for several developing societies, multinational ones like India.

any kings, prime ministers or isters crave for books, and few an awareness of the books rese books, however, have assemeries of insight of a movement y not be a wind blowing in the new of time, but is nevertheless alive.

—BHABANI SEN GUPTA

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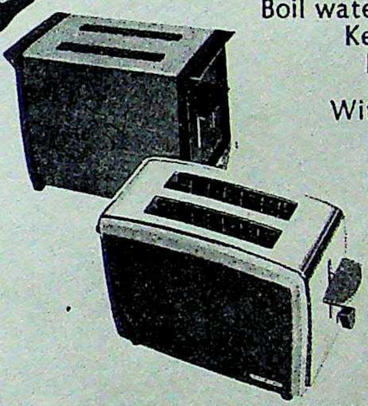

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Vinod Doshi. Director: Pramod
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s a singularly unremarkable come- for Amitabh Bachchan who ap- on screen in the first new release film since his dramatic battle for months ago. Dull, hackneyed, and pedestrian, *Nastik* is an unimagi- routine pot-boiler with virtually to set it apart from the hundreds of films which preceded it. Equal doses d superstition, religious mumbo- d miracles, a supposedly torried r, and a string of capers, crimes and are injected into it regularity. k for all its back- fight sequences routines and love ls flat: it is a weak in a genre which ly exhausted every d gimmick availa- leaves its viewer oppressively frustra- e of *déja vu.*

es as a melodramatic following in the well- s of *Sholay* and its s imitators *Nastik* ttle conviction. The weak amalgam of d themes which ether with the usual x of chance and ce. Driven apart from his and God—after a frame-up by the zamindar who makes him a fugitive, the child Bachchan, predictably petty crime in the big city. His sole is to avenge his father's murder by the zamindar, which is just as well, chance encounter finds him a partner equally obsessed with murdering the landlord. Balvir (Pran) is looking for ed man who raped his daughter, kar for the zamindar whose eye he out.

ak Villain: *Nastik*'s weakest link is Khan—thief, smuggler, rapist and zamindar who lands up in a palatial in Bombay from where he runs his d crime interests. Apparently cast d loathsome crook who will stop g to get his way, Khan's role as o badly written that he fizzles out m the start. Every crime he plans abortive and he is so unsuccessful at every caper he undertakes that Tiger emerges more a bumbling, comical figure than a terrifying crook.

The plot progresses through an all too predictable pattern of crime and punishment, with the added refinement this time of divine retribution for the villainous zamindar. Shankar, who turns atheist after God fails to protect his father or keep him from being separated from his mother and sister, teams up with Balvir to loot the citizens of Bombay while both keep a look-out for the common enemy. Before they realise that Tiger is the murderer-rapist they are hunting, they already settle some scores with him by stealing his smuggled haul of gold and diamonds and destroying a lavish underground den. Meanwhile, a touch of the lost-and-found is introduced when Shankar discovers his blinded mother and sister in a Bombay hovel. *Nastik* moves through the routine confrontations and fight sequences, which are broken up by Deven Verma's comic bits and insipid love scenes between Hema Malini and Bachchan, till the final denouement in the village, when God restores the balance by divinely striking down the bumbling villain while reviving Shankar's stricken sister.

Amitabh Bachchan: misapplied talent

Nastik suffers from a blatant disregard for audience memory and intelligence. The story was nothing to distinguish it from the scores of similar films made in the last 15 years, entire sequences are plagiarised from superhits of the past. The transitional shot in which Amitabh switches from boy-fugitive to man-crook has been used repeatedly since *Yaadon Ki Baarat* a decade ago.

The weak plot and uncertain acting are made worse by a near-total lack of direction. Barring Bachchan who manages a passable role as the religious sceptic who gets converted, the cast of *Nastik* potters through the film in a histrionic daze: Amjad Khan and Hema Malini put in their worst performances in a long time, and the bit actors are surprisingly a little better. At movie's end, in fact, a tense fight sequence is anti-climactically cut short when Khan mumbles a weak apology for his misdeeds, only to be struck down by the gods moments later. The movie, like its comical, blundering crook, draws to a bumbling close. —CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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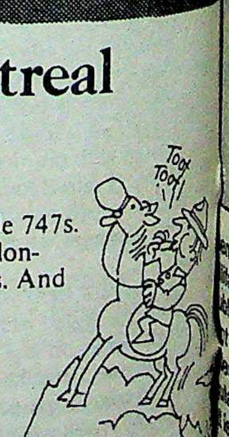

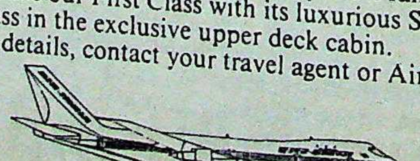

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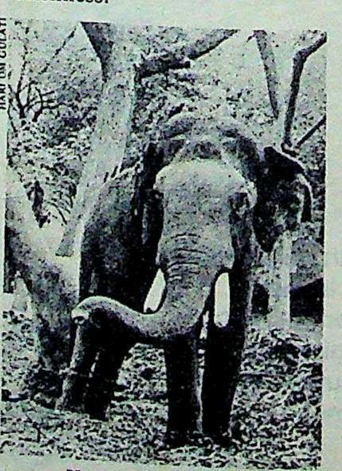
Samples of the collection and (top) the designer team: promoting India

■ With a whiff of 'Inspiration India', the title of their show, they flew over from the US under the exotic trade name of Byzantium to discover the "wealth of India" and create a blend between the East and the West. The high fashion messiahs—**Stephen Adler** (a jeweller); **Susan Reinstein** (goldsmith); **Susan Bebe** (fashion designer); **Lisa Simmons** (hand-painted fabric designer) and **La Crasia** (accessories designer)—wove into the interiors of the country at the invitation of the Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports Corporation of India Ltd. After just 28 days of hectic work they presented a range of designers delights. The exercise, as Adler put it, "is to sell Indian goods abroad, not on a mass scale but quality stuff for mostly the upper-middle class and wealthy people in America. And believe me there is a tremendous market for high fashion, quality clothes in America". Each designer from the group of five is a specialist in their own right. And if their exercise in India proves worthwhile the next thing you might see is Nancy Reagan at a reception in the White House garbed in a designer's Pochampalli silk dress!

■ He was the elephant who got left behind. And if his memory serves him right **Kuttikrishnan**, popularly known as Kutti, the nine-foot five-inch tusker from Kerala is never going to forget this trip to Delhi. The ailing Kutti, who has a fan following of over a lakh in Trichur, and is worth Rs 2 lakh, is paying for his past indiscretion: he got into a great elephantine "heat" and refused to cooperate with his mahouts, while training for the Ninth Asiad last November. But now Kutti is languishing on the greens of New Delhi's Deer Park, his legs chained to a tree and manacled so tightly that he cannot move freely. He looks away from his mahouts, his eyes are sunken and his frame drooping. This pride of Kerala's pachyderms has shed chunks from his 5,000 kg bulk and has become painfully thin. Although fresh palm leaves are sent for him all the way from Kerala, he eats little and is ostensibly in a state of depression. While authorities are battling to truck him back to Trichur, his hometown, an SPCA official confided: "You know what ails Kutti. It is loneliness."

HARI OM GULATI



Kutti: lonely wait

■ He kept his read through endless mid if the tall sharp-nose nationally acclaime **Salman Rushdie**, 36, h he'd keep them awa rough the night with h ing prose. Last Rushdie made his m ted pilgrimage to India

Rushdie: coming h

a few of his sacred th the new English countrymen. Rushdie born in Bombay in 1 [illegible], like the hero of h *Midnight's Children*, o stroke of midnight) left f climes in England at t 14. On a lecture tour Rushdie has just c another novel titled which deals with im and racism with a m woven in. Said Rush last book was abou came from and *Sh* about where I came made it quite funny."

SIGN POSTS

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■ **Appointed:** V.N. as the managing dire State Bank of India. is also the member Rangarajan Commi Bank Deposits.

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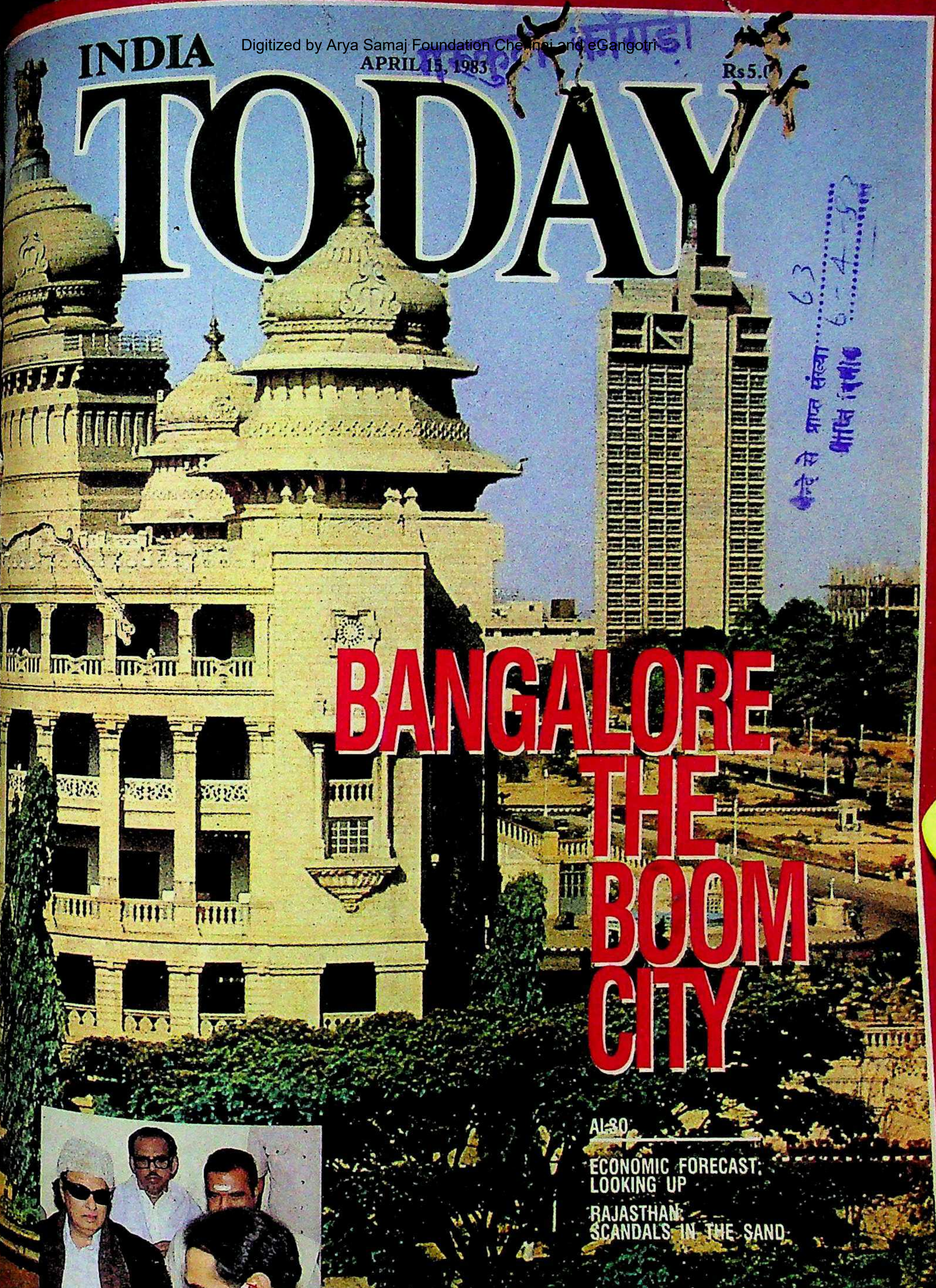

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FOR THE FORTNIGHT APRIL 1-15, 1983

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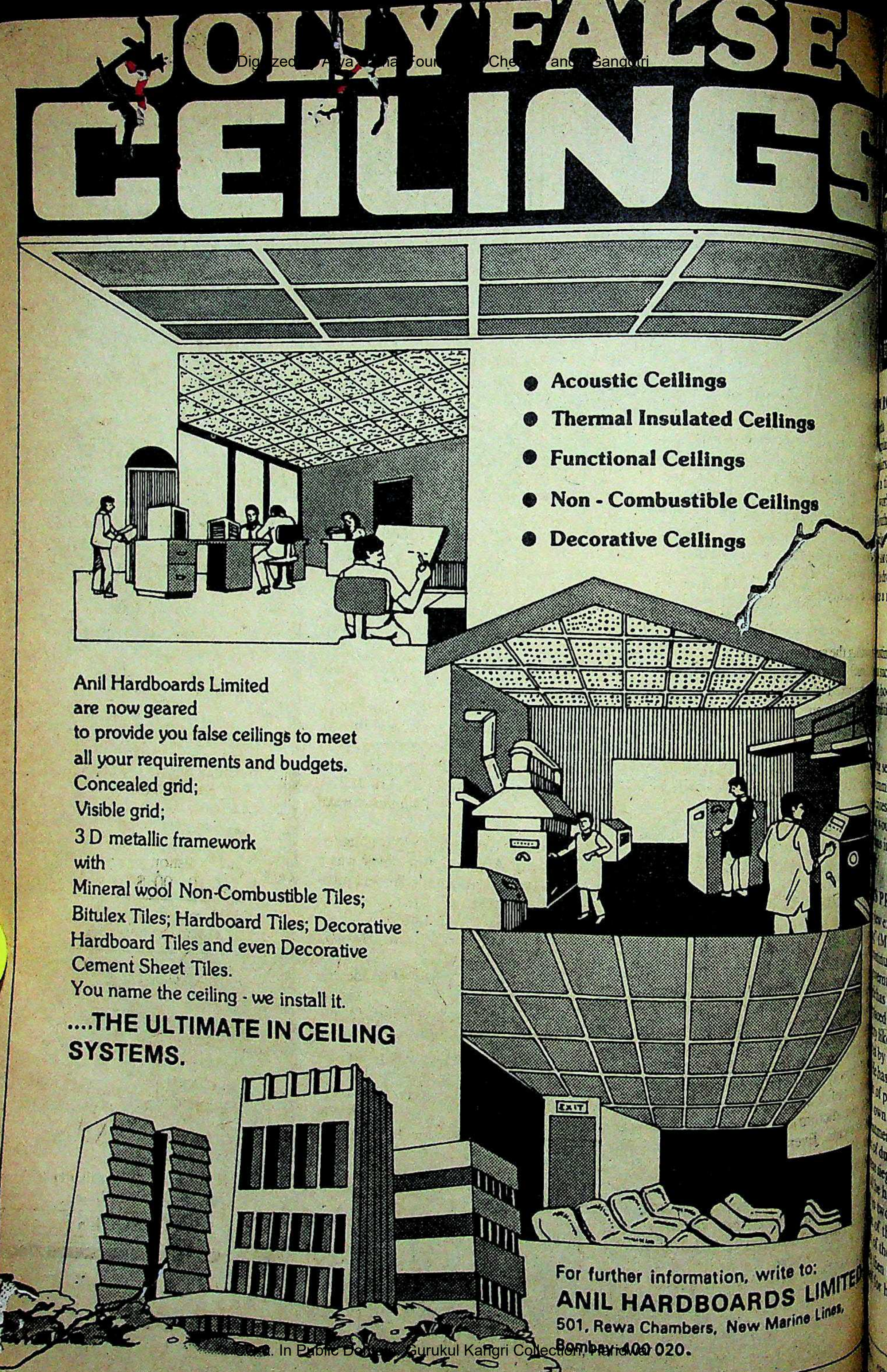
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

PROFESSIONAL journalism usually demands a certain sense of detachment between the writer and his subject. Journalists are not expected to be personally involved in their topics, it tends to colour their perspective. Occasionally, however, there have to be exceptions. This fortnight's cover story is one such. RAJ CHENGAPPA, *who is 26, came to Bangalore when he was all of four years old and has identified himself with the city ever since. From playing marbles in the streets to finishing at Bangalore University and starting work at the local* City Tab, *a weekly tabloid, Chengappa is a product of the city. His father, a retired army officer, settled down in the city and, like so many of the people in the story, finds the city has changed before his very eyes. In spite of his youth, so does Chengappa. Says he: "I can't recognise the city of my childhood. Collecting information for the report was like discovering a totally alien city—a new Bangalore."*

EVEN the best of things come to outlive their usefulness, and growth and change demand innovations and new ideas. So it is with this column which ever since the magazine started has sought to keep readers informed of behind the scenes activity at INDIA TODAY. *The concept of the 'Letter from the Editor' was to tell readers something about the journalists putting together the magazine and occasionally reflect the relationship between the media and society. But it did, perforce, have to deal with a limited number of people and issues, which limited its format. Conscious of this, the magazine planned some time ago to phase out the Letter from the Editor in its present form and reserve it for occasions when there is something noteworthy to bring to the attention of the readers.*

At the beginning, the Letter was innovative. It has since become commonplace in the Indian media. When the magazine was in its formative stages this kind of communication served a purpose. Now that the magazine has undergone its teething process and its style of operation and treatment of news is fairly well known to the regular reader, it was felt the time had come to reflect on larger issues rather than on the working of the magazine itself. The introduction of the 'Comment' page two issues ago was the first step in this direction.

STARTING with the next issue, more space will be given over to letters written to the editor, which over the years have swelled from a few dozen a fortnight to several hundred. For a nationally distributed magazine with a print run of 235,000 and an estimated readership of over 1 million, the letters that pour in each day provide an invaluable mirror on the mood of a sizeable, representative segment of the reading public. It is indicative of the current popular sentiment that the largest number of letters the magazine has received on any one issue was on the recent killings in Assam. And so, this column signs off as a regular feature giving more power to our readers—and, of course, more space.



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TODAY
TAKES CHARGE

ROLE

Takes Charge" (March 31) India's new role in international. And it is fortuitous that it has time when the rest of the non-world has realised the need for cooperation, a new global eco- and disarmament. With India to a more even keel it is poss-dream of Nehru, Tito and Nasser reality.

Rajiv Handa

the summit with such perfec-such short notice Mrs Gandhi has boosted our prestige in the inter-political arena.

Sabuj Sen

seen Mrs Gandhi's performan-summit no one can doubt her ability and provide leadership. Now should turn these talents back to in India.

Rajesh Raheja

PROBLEMS

expressed in "The End Of The (March 31) that Ramakrishna to face difficulties in prod-ment into action" is not cor-has no one to blame but himself. a police officer of unquestio-like K.C.K. Raja with one who by the Kudoor and Desai com-has appointed three more direc-of police and has therefore gone own dictum of not creating any ments. Even those accused of duty during the circus tragedy have been promoted. And has, in his new budget, given two of his campaign promises of the professional tax and ad-the retirement age from 55 to Hegde has no one to blame his lacklustre performance.

A. Krishnan

THE WRONG TRACK

The article "On A Losing Track" (March 31) had a mistake. Apta and Rona are not in Madhya Pradesh but in Maharashtra.

Khopoli *C.B. Mishra*

ASSAM ATROCITIES

The cover story "A State Ravaged" (March 15) dealt with the plight of the Assamese with precision and sympathy. Our Government is the first to issue statements about atrocities anywhere in the world but seems incapable of dealing with it in the country. But now the urgency of the situation cannot be disguised any longer and everything must be done to ensure that sanity prevails.

Chandigarh *Tom Ifon*

■ I cannot comprehend how the author says that the agitation was non-violent till the elections were declared. For the last four years there have been numerous murders and constant harassment of people who do not support the agitation. And how did the agitators manage to get their hands on bombs and guns as soon as the elections were announced? I think it is time that we recognise the agitators for what they are—a threat to national security.

Howrah *Vivek Ghosh*

■ The photographs were gruesome and I had to steel myself before looking at them. I cannot understand how the Government can be so unbending specially when the J&K Government can get away with Article 370.

Jammu *Padmini Jamwal*

■ The decision to replace the Non-aligned Movement with Assam on the cover was a very sound one. And the report further justified this decision as it was a cut above the others published in various journals.

Madras *K. Mohanty*

■ The Government's policy of divide and rule is having its pernicious effect in Assam. The state is now sharply divided along religious, linguistic and ethnic lines and is in grave danger of breaking up. I think people from all parts should come to Assam and raise the consciousness about this problem in their areas. The rest of the country should know that this is happening in Assam today—it could happen in their own states tomorrow.

Jorhat *Arup Saikia*

■ If nothing else then the scale of pre-election violence should convince the Government that in order to save Assam they will have to negotiate with the agitation leaders. If they don't then they will have to

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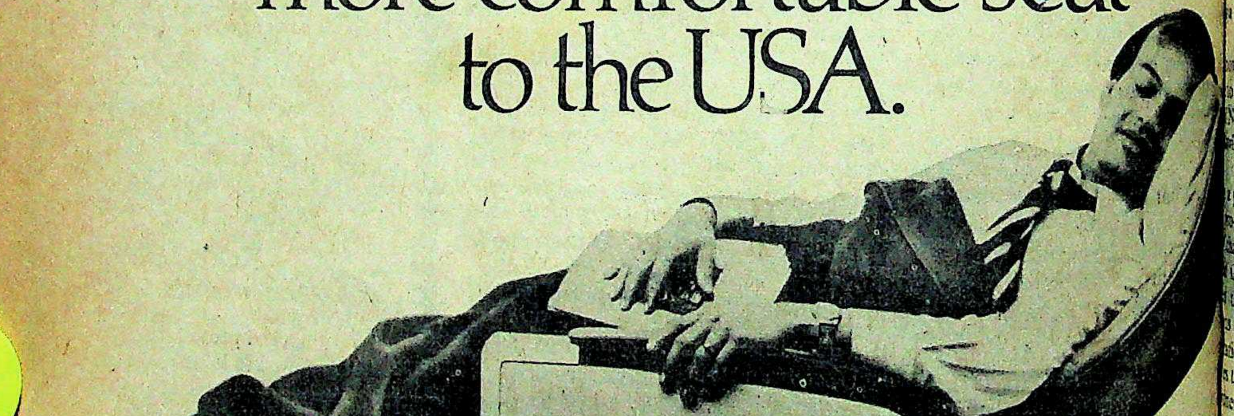

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right that if the Centre cannot
deshis who migrated to Assam
1-71 back then they should re-
throughout India. Why should
bear the brunt of the refugees?
sanctuary in India, not Assam.

Nirad C. Mohanta

atter how newsworthy you
am, I think it was in very bad
it on the cover and make the
vulnerable to criticism from the
came for the NAM summit. The
sacres though heinous and bar-
have waited. A reputed and res-
urnal like INDIA TODAY should
better than to wash our dirty
lic.

Nilam Munjial

GHTMARE

Nellie Nightmare" (March 15)
e beyond measure. It is always
and the poor who pay for the
wer-hungry politicians.

B. Lyndoh

many elephants will the lady
Belchi ride to go and console the
Nellie?

patti *V. Subramanyam*

pity that the correspondent has
agitation line. For four years a
auvinistic and renegade students
the country to ransom. Having
the economic and educational
in the state and brought the
tion to a standstill they have only
to blame for Assam's economic
ss. If they were serious about
things could have been worked

Rupa Mohanty

ogan of the agitators is *Jai 'Ai
Jai Ai Ahom* as written in the
m is Assam and the Ahoms are
the Assamese people.

Mansh Barlhakur

SE'

omment "A Bloody Price"
is full of brave phrases like "Cul-
not be evaded...the carnage will
tion...those responsible will not
". But they ring pitifully hollow!
bility, with your and the rest of
able assistance, is well on its way
l evasion. You say "the Central
t is culpable", and with that you
have already evaded the issue. For you know perfectly well that decisions are taken by people and not by amorphous entities like governments! Assuming that you are actually in earnest about your bleatings of governmental culpability, how do you propose, in concrete terms, that the Central Government acknowledges its culpability? Or were you just hoping that they'd be sporting enough to do so on their own?

There is a lot of obscurantist hogwash being bandied about by the media, effectively writing off the whole tragedy to the Government's "errors of judgement" and "failure to read the mood of the people"—with the strong attendant implication that even if anyone is 'culpable', it is only in respect of misjudged political strategy! Our politicians—beginning with their 'charismatic' leader—knew perfectly well that this mock-election would entail bloodshed. Their only miscalculation was in respect of the amount. A few dozen deaths—no self-respecting politician balks at so paltry a price! The report in fact clearly indicates that there are many politicians who feel that even a few 100 battered children were 'well spent'—in the interests of democracy, of course!

The chief elections, commissioner's interview is a masterly exposition and pointer on how the essence is being obscured by flatulence from the ruling triumvirate of media, politicians and bureaucrats. He has commented at great length on the esoteric implications of avoiding election, deadlines, precedent, electoral rolls and existing laws—whereas all that was required of him was to rule decisively on whether or not it was possible to hold free and fair elections! Did it require great political and constitutional insight to answer that? No—but it probably did require standing up to Mrs Gandhi!

Bombay *J.N. Bawa*

■ To compare the carnage in Assam to the massacres in Shatila and Sabra in Lebanon is unfair. The violence in Lebanon was carried out with the tacit permission of the Israeli Government. No one can accuse the Indian Government of this.

Faridabad *Ashok Sehrai*

■ In the article "A Novel Judgement" (March 15) the Telugu words *idena nyayam* have been translated as 'this is my justice'. The correct translation is 'is this justice?'

Coimbatore *G. Usha Mohan*

WHAT'S IN A NAM?

What is the use of lavishing a dozen pages of NAM ("Charting A New Course", March 15) when it has become an irrelevant movement? A leading light of the movement relies on the USSR to such an extent that he even came to New Delhi on a Soviet plane. The members vie with each to stock arms and then fault the superpowers for doing the same thing. Numerous members are at war with neighbours but the organisation is trying to promote world peace. They talk of justice and have the worst human rights records in the world. Is it any wonder that NAM with its inner contradictions has no meaningful achievements to boast of? The summit, like the Asiad, is just another ruse to boost ruling party egos.

Paramakud *G. Parthasarathy*

NO FEEDBACK

I can see no reason why the recommendations made by Department of Health and Family Welfare's committees have not accepted for two years ("Code Of Misconduct", March 15). Why spend so much time, energy and money on the committees if the Government will not accept their findings?

Ahmedabad *P.G. Kulkarni*

LOW MORALE

To an old pilot the article "A Dangerous Drift" (February 28) made sad reading. While it is factual, it stops short of being complete. The article makes no mention of the fact that two versions of the Lafontaine committee were prepared—one for the Defence Ministry (which was the watered-down version) and one where the actual causes of human failure were set down was kept at air headquarters. Ironically Air Marshal Lafontaine has since been made the AOP and is responsible for the implementation of his recommendations.

The problem in the IAF is one of motivation, stagnation and inadequate basic amenities. Any dynamic organisation should have movement upward and outward. Outward movement is blocked because the good officers are not allowed to leave while mediocre superseded officers refuse to leave. So stagnation spreads.

Coimbatore *Capt G. Muthuswamy*

■ The most important factor for the IAF's high accident rate is the growing discontent and dissatisfaction of ground duty officers. There is such a disparity between them and flying officers that morale has hit a dangerous low.

New Delhi *Flt Lt A.K. Singh*

POWER POLITICS

"Shabby Window Dressing" (February 28) shows that the Congress(I) leadership has learnt nothing. They must take definite steps to revitalise the party—not make pointless appointments and encourage futile actions. This is what happens to a party whose sole motive for existence is power.

Bhatinda *S. P. [illegible]gh*

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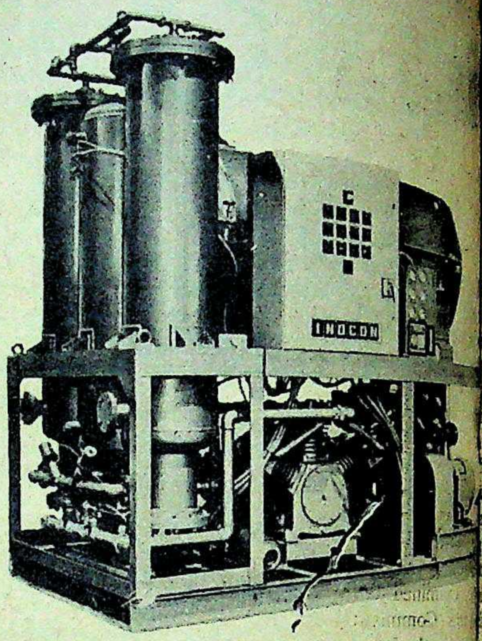

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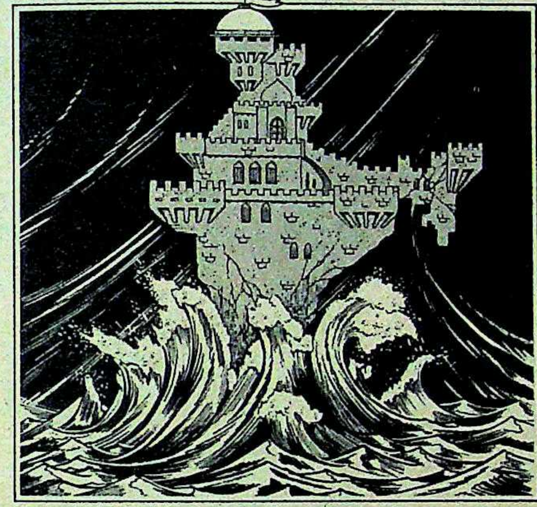

CENTRE has done well to Sarkaria Commission to exa- state relations. It is a welco- to defuse a volatile situation not be a ruse to shelve an urgent attention. Justice not be able to do justice to has been entrusted with if he is nly to tinker with issues to ap- community or another or take ut of this complaint or that. relations have never been examined. The Administra- Commission looked at in the '60s but its reports gathered dust. The Tamil Nadu 10 years ago received the report of the Rajamannar it set up, but it carried little conviction with the Centre. Sarkaria should be given a reasonable time frame and be forward, to the evolving nature of the Indian state, at tional and interpretive nature of the Centre-state rela- entirety. And he should be aware that he has to satisfy a of its rights and obligations, and states craving more satisfy their local mandate. If the commission is given the and the requisite freedom, it could be a constitutional Anything less would merely be playing politics.

be extremely short-sighted to view the initiative of the ministers, as some in the ruling Congress(I) party seem as an "extra-constitutional" or "dangerous" move. It is the kind. At a time when the people from two corners of Assam and Punjab, are in far more ominous ways ex- satisfaction with the nature of their relationship with the country, the Bangalore meeting was a moderate and limi- It was also a necessary one, and should push the Centre growing Centre-state acrimony more seriously.

for this is opportune. As long as the Centre and states by the same party, disaffection was subdued. The first quation was broken, after the 1967 elections, the states led by parties or coalitions which had national preten- were merely chips off the old Congress block, or came Sangh right or the Socialist left. Today, the scenario is ent. The most potent forces at work in the states have a gional colour.

and Punjab, their Congress(I) administrations notwith- been in flames long enough to testify to the power of Assamese extremists. The AIADMK has effectively snat- Nadu from the Congress(I) fold for the foreseeable futu- Desam now appears to have done the same in Andhra there is little to suggest that the National Conference is control of Jammu & Kashmir. And for all practical purposes, the Marxists have been reduced to representing essentially regional interests in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura.

THIS is the reality of India, a country wrapped not in a monochromatic political blanket, but covered by a crazy quilt of diverse hues. As long as the Congress(I) had in its ranks leaders of stature in the states—as it did in Jawaharlal Nehru's time —who could speak out for their states' interest and keep the quilt from fraying at the seams, regional aspirations were muted. But today there are mostly satraps and puppets in the Congress(I) in the states, and decision making has been sucked relentlessly to the Centre. Regional aspirations, increasingly unfulfilled, have responded by adopting a more aggressive stance.

The outcome may be undesirable but it can hardly be considered illogical. It might have been prevented had it been anticipated a decade ago, but in the last few years the Congress(I) leadership has had its hands full simply trying to win and preserve power with little time to think of larger issues. The proper reaction now is not to perpetuate the myth that the rise of regional parties is a threat to the unity of India or that it will weaken the Centre. As Mrs Gandhi said in Parliament, announcing the Sarkaria Commission, the Centre cannot be strong if the states are weak. But the strength of the Centre also depends on the strength of the party which rules there, and the failure is not of the regional parties but that of the Congress(I). It is precisely because Indira Gandhi's party has been unable to cope with regional aspirations that regional parties have come to office.

The challenge before Mrs Gandhi at the moment is not to see how her party's writ can be restored in the states it has lost, though she would be a poor politician if she did not put that high on her list of political priorities. But she will fall flat on her face if she doesn't recognise that the more realistic and urgent task is to recognise that regional parties have come to stay and that the way to cope with them is to allow regionalism the elbow room it needs to play and perhaps eventually subside. The way to do this is not by singling out the Opposition governments in the states for stepmotherly treatment but to interpret the Constitution for better defined federalism.

The authors of the Constitution envisaged neither a fully fledged federal nor a unitary state, but one with characteristics of both. Its interpretation by an overbearing Centre and the states' somnolent attitude has led to executive power flowing to the Centre, whether in industrial development, appointment of judges, dissolution of assemblies, role of governors on enactment of laws. It is now time for this distorted interpretation of the Constitution to be rectified to reflect current reality and also prepare it to accommodate the emerging political trends of the future.

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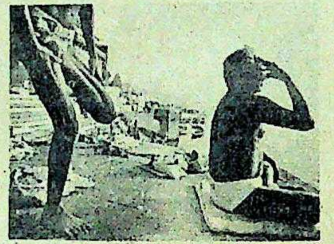
COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY BHAWAN SINGH

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

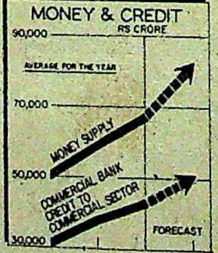
COVER STORY: From the sleep pensioner's paradise of two decade Bangalore, the capital of Karnatak rapidly developed into one of the dynamic cities in the country. The city in the south has become a mag industry and labour, which are dra the myriad opportunities it offers. boom has brought its own problem today the throbbing metropolis is tr cope with its own dazzling success.

SPECIAL REPORT: Last fortnight, four southern non-Congress(I) chief ministers met in Bangalore—and immediately sparked off fresh arguments on the complicated issue of Centre-state relations. This time round, however, the fact that all chief ministers were from the south added an acrimonious twist to the debate, which intensified when the Government appointed a one-man commission to look into the Centre-state question. **Page 14**



RELIGION: The seven-kilometre str the Ganga at Varanasi is polluted by half-burnt remains of thousands of h bodies cremated every year at the two burning ghats. Now, a moveme the Swachh Ganga (Clean Ganga) w instal an electric crematorium funds which have been sanctioned by the state Government. But the move is and the issue may end up in court.

INVESTIGATION: Hand-pumps that don't deliver water, questionable land and mining deals, fiddles in tax collection: these are some of the scandals that opposition leaders aired in the Rajasthan Assembly last month. Dissidents added to the woes of Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur by putting the same scandals down in a memorandum to their supremo in Delhi. **Page 72**



BUSINESS: Now in its third year INDIA TODAY Economic Forecast co with its periodic peep into the crys taking in all the major compone economy: gross national product, growth, agricultural production, and exports, money supply and b credit—and last, but not the least, impact of the budget. **Page 88**

SPECIAL FEATURE: Bonded labour is a harsh fact of Indian rural life—or was, until the Government released the serfs from their bonds. In Madhya Pradesh, the authorities freed hundreds of bonded labourers, who were promised all material help for a fresh start in life. However, the aid has either not arrived, or has been too little and too inapt to be of any help to the free men. A report. **Page 126**

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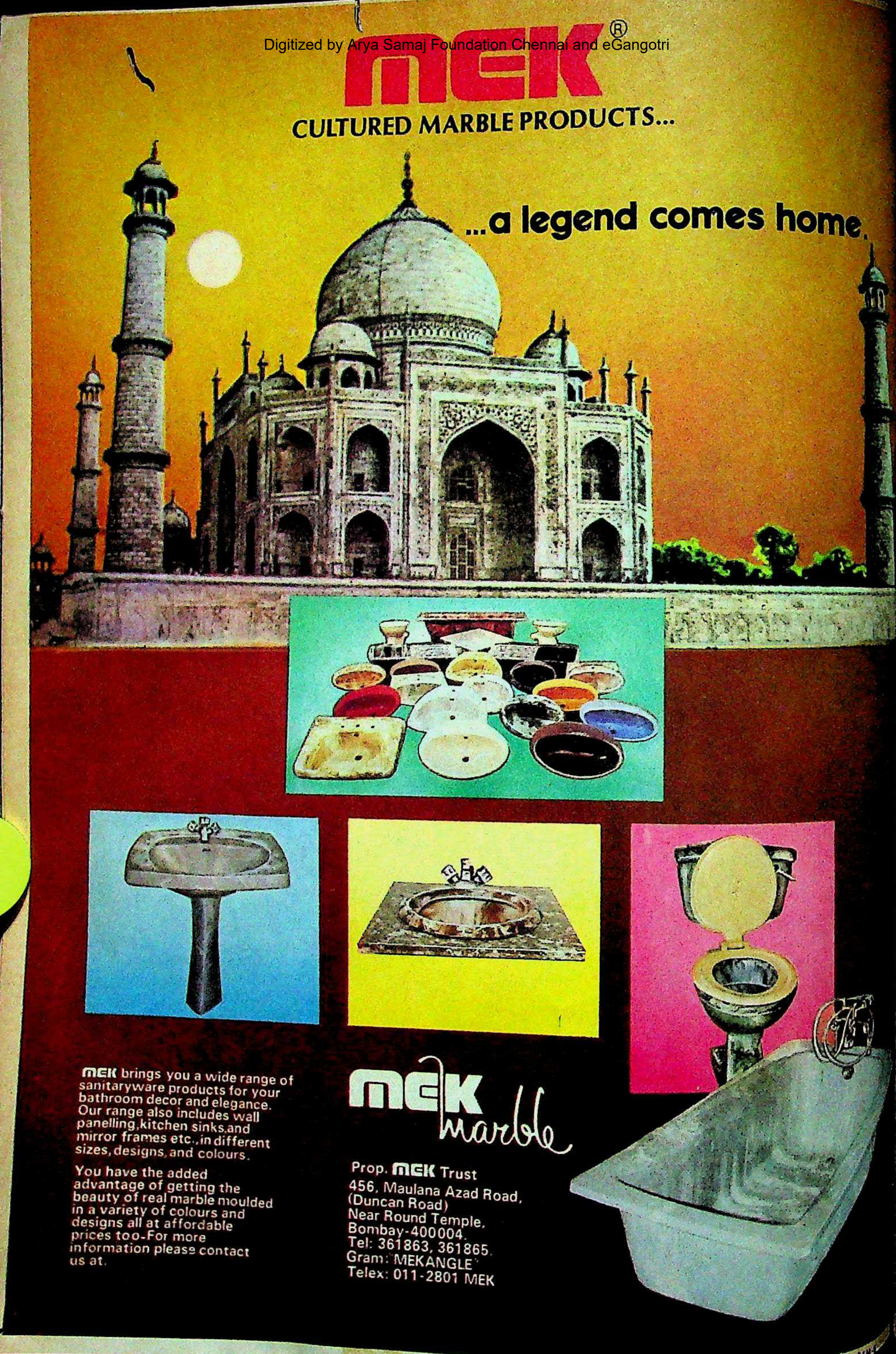

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has a genius for arranging monster *tamashas* overnight and when Iraq unsuitable as a summit venue India rose to the challenge with panache. God days to create the world; India would have done it in five.

—Trevor Fishlock in The London Times

North has grown aged and is fast getting incapacitated. The megatons of power no longer ensure imperial domination but paralyse its faculties.

—Nikhil Chakravartty in Mainstream

Janata Party tried to swallow us. They might swallow us, but it will be to digest.

—Kranti Ranga leader S. Bangarappa in The Week

Gandhi functions best in a conspiratorial atmosphere, with officials and doing her bidding unquestioningly.

—S.Nihal Singh in Newsweek

Jagannath Mishra will not revolt. Never.

—Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra in Sunday

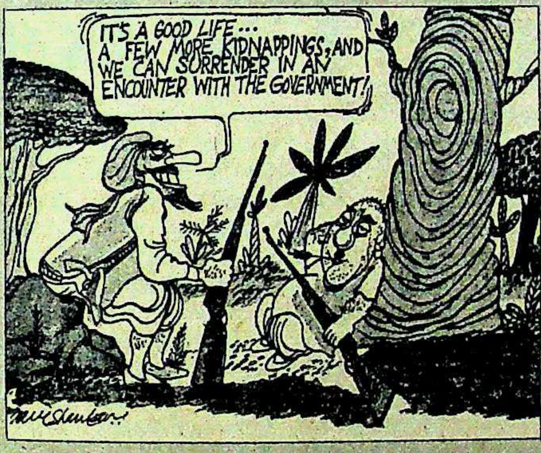
relatively safe trains are the stationary

—Editorial comment in The Times of India

Future Lies In Mud.

for article on cheap in Express Magazine

Bengal, they (critics) simple system: you give two pegs of whisky they things about you; if they write that you *—Classical singer Bhimsen Joshi in* Society


IT'S A GOOD LIFE... A FEW MORE KIDNAPPINGS, AND WE CAN SURRENDER IN AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE GOVERNMENT!
ravi Shankar

RAVI SHANKAR IN INDIAN EXPRESS

nothing else, Shashi (Kapoor) can claim tax exemption for showing National of a Sardarji turned Hindu, married to a Maharashtrian, their Sardar/ friends are from Allahabad, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, his girl-friend Christian....

—Devi on Kapoor's Vijeta *in* Star & Style

films are being enjoyed by the elite of the society and applauded by the intellectual cineastes, critics and journalists at big parties where wine and are in abundance.

—Malayalam film star Prem Nazir on 'serious' cinema in Screen

family had not left Pakistan, where they still live, I would still be living India means to me much more than Pakistan.

—Salman Rushdie quoted in Bombay

Don't: criticise your previous employer; discuss domestic problems; talk in syllables; stare at the ceiling; PANIC.

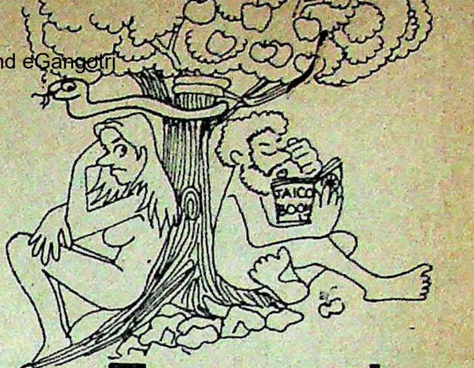
Nazneen Karmali on 'Sailing smoothly through an interview' in Business India

finance minister cannot tax and at the same time please, any more than he in love and yet remain a brahmachari.

—Dr Malcolm Adiseshiah, Rajya Sabha member, during the budget debate

primary interest has always been life itself. I would rather play with a child interesting person or learn a new skill than write. Writing to me is like

—Playwright Vijay Tendulkar in Express Magazine



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(From left to right) D. Ramachandran, MGR, Hegde and Rama Rao: asking for more

CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

Federalism To The Fore

FOR A gathering that came to be viewed with such trepidation in New Delhi, provoked at least one high-level Congress(I) official to make intemperate remarks and probably propelled the formation of a commission on Centre-state relations, the conclave last fortnight of four southern non-Congress(I) chief ministers was surprisingly low-key. When they emerged from their 10-hour closed-door deliberations and announced the formation of their Southern Council, the chief ministers of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry seemed to go out of their way to be conciliatory.

Said a beaming Ramakrishna Hegde, the Janata chief minister of Karnataka who was the brain behind the meeting: "It is a step in the right direction and the meeting was a success." He went on to explain that its purpose was to try and sort out problems between states at their own level. "We should not run to the Centre every other day to solve our problems; the Centre must be kept at a respectable distance to ensure the spirit of federalism."

Tamil Nadu's M.G. Ramachandran, who mooted the idea of the council, was optimistic but reserved when he said: "It is a good augury. The council was constituted as a pioneering step to show the way to the rest of the country. Today we are four, tomorrow we may be 22." And Andhra Pradesh's N.T. Rama Rao went out of his way to explain that the council would not be an anti-Centre front when he said: "We support a strong Centre, but we want the limbs to be strong too so that the country is in good physical form." Added Hegde: "I do not consider that the proposed council of chief ministers will in any way hamper relations between the states and the Union Government. On the contrary, it will further strengthen ties."

Mixed Reactions: Outside the conclave, however, the meeting provoked different reactions. Former president Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, speaking at the second INDIA TODAY-PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties) journalism award function in Bombay, thundered: "This mother-in-law business from New Delhi must stop." Barring Charan Singh's Lok Dal and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) the opposition parties broadly supported the idea of the council of chief ministers. But within the ruling party, reaction was sharp—and swift. With the Akali problem defying solution in the north and chief ministers getting together in the south, Prime Minister Indira Ga nounced the appointment of Justi Sarkaria to head a commission and the entire gamut of Centre-state ties dly enough, she had also instructed Chief Minister K. Karunakaran, to the Bangalore conclave, to stay a purpose of this was to label the ganging up of non-Congress(I) ch ters. Going one step further, the ty's General Secretary C.M. Steph press conference in New Delhi a day March 20 deliberation and an "The meeting is an extra-constitu and is highly dangerous because it the rising regionalist tendencies. Th seems to have set the stage for a n fight."

Stephen's outburst may have

R.S. SARKARIA

Urgent Task

IT MAY take at least two years for Ranjit Singh Sarkaria to prepare his report on Centre-state relations. "That is a conservative estimate," he told INDIA TODAY in a telephonic interview from his Chandigarh home on March 26.

Mrs Gandhi's March 24 announcement in both houses of Parliament said: "The commission will examine the working of the arrangements between the Centre and the states and recommend such changes in these arrangements as may be appropriate within the present constitutional framework."

The terms of reference have not yet been worked out, but Union Home Secretary T.N. Chaturvedi thin will be ready in the next two weeks. The commission may ge later this month. To be headq New Delhi, it may be staffed by people.

"A lot of legal and con work has to be done." Sarkari added, "the work is of a great and challenging nature."

No Expertise: Apart fro that as a judge of the Suprem was familiar with the articles stitution relating to relations Centre and the states, Sar that he has not much exper subject. At the moment, he ing the Rajamannar Comm the Administrative Reforms report of the early 1970s and that has been shown by the par- their statements since the meet- was guilty of jumping to conclu- one thing, the Bangalore state the first of its kind. When the was in power in New Delhi in meeting was held in Madras gress(I) chief ministers were in dhra Pradesh and Karnataka, was ruled by a Congress (S)-led years later, the Marxist chief West Bengal, Kerala and Tri- gether to exchange notes on their periences in running state admi- The Centre frowned on the move posed collaboration was hastily lest it provoke New Delhi into of the state governments.

as sources close to the chief mi- INDIA TODAY, there is nothing in tion that forbids chief ministers informal consultative mecha- they can hardly be accused of viola- or spirit of the Constitution.

ended Changes: Called primarily to discuss common financial problems, the meeting did go beyond the agenda prepared for it. Initially, it was to discuss such complicated but core issues as the sharing of money between the Centre and states and states' overdrafts with the Reserve Bank of India. The chief ministers hoped that they could find a consensus on the subject, rope in other states and present a joint front to the 8th Finance Commission headed by former deputy prime minister Y.B. Chavan which is looking into some of these matters. But though several financial demands were made, they seemed eventually to become secondary to the drive for greater administrative autonomy which emerged at the meeting.

The four chief ministers demanded that "provisions in the Constitution would have to be changed to accommodate and give full play to the new definitions of (a) Centre-state relationships and (b) relationships between the states." In particular, they sought a re-examination of Articles 256 and 257 of the Constitution which determine administrative relations between the Centre and states, and give the Centre overriding powers. Article 256, for instance, says that the states will exercise their authority "to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that state" and that the Centre will be enabled to give the states any directives "as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for the purpose". And, Article 257 enjoins the states to exercise their executive power so "as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive power of the Union".

In concrete terms, the chief ministers demanded the right of state legislatures to enact laws in subjects for which they constitutionally have executive responsibility without having to seek the President's—effectively meaning the Centre's—assent. The demand was fortified by the fact that several legislative measures have been held up or returned by the Centre. The Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Second Amendment Bill 1980, which seeks to invalidate land transfers made between 1958 and 1960 in a bid to unearth *benami* holdings is a case in point. The bill was passed almost unanimously by both houses of the legislature and sent to Delhi for the President's assent in August 1980. Two years later, the state Government received a telex message from Delhi saying that the president was withholding assent. Had the bill gone through, the state Government would have gained access to about 1 lakh acres. Karnataka is worried that its recently enacted Lokayukta Ordinance, which seeks to root out corruption among public servants, and Andhra Pradesh its Hindu Succession (Andhra Pradesh Amendment) Bill 1983, which

Farooq Abdullah
Jammu & Kashmir

"It does not matter if we belong to the Congress(I) or are pro-Congress(I) chief ministers. The harsh fact is that the Centre does not appreciate or even understand the hopes and aspirations of the states. This is the basic cause of difficulties between the Centre and the states."

K. Karunakaran
Kerala

re is nothing wrong in a fiscal commission. We interested in getting our are for the development of the state."

Jyoti Basu
West Bengal

"We have always pointed out that investments by financial institutions in states like West Bengal are negligible. If this is allowed to continue it will only lead to greater regional disparities."

ated to the subject. aria, who retired Supreme Court in 1981, feels he will services of a few who have specialised subject. "I have to good secretariat com- competent people. have to visit all the collect evidence state Governments others who may thing to say on the subject."

aria, 67, is not new to the busi- ry commissions. He headed 78 commission that inquired of corruption against the Munnetra Kazhagam ministry M. Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu. He had held Karunanidhi and some of his ministerial colleagues guilty of five out of 22 cases in his final report which was submitted to Parliament on May 12, 1978.

Born at Patiala (Punjab) in January 1916, he did his bachelor's degree and LL.B. and started practice in his home town in 1940. In 1943 he joined the judicial service of Patiala state as a sub-judge-cum-magistrate. He served as district and sessions judge, registrar of Punjab High Court and judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court before he became a judge of the Supreme Court in 1973. He has also published three volumes in Punjabi.

Sarkaria: formidable challenge

seeks to provide equal property rights for women in the state, will meet the same fate.

IN DISCUSSION, most of the time however was taken up by financial questions. As long as a single party ruled in most states and at the Centre, dissatisfaction with Centre-state fiscal ties was in low-key. But with the spread of state governments of different political parties the problem has worsened. Some of the economic complaints voiced at Bangalore had therefore a clear political hue: Kerala, under a Congress(I) chief minister, had been given more rice than Tamil Nadu under the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK); and Andhra Pradesh's first steel project, at Vishakhapatnam, was suddenly being starved of funds after the state voted in the Telugu Desam.

Other complaints reflected broader feelings of southern neglect: rice costs twice as much to cultivate as wheat, but this was not reflected in the procurement prices of the two commodities; and under the complex formula that governs the transfer of funds from the Centre to the states, the more advanced southern states were being given a raw deal in favour of the more backward states elsewhere.

Arjun Singh
Madhya Pradesh

"Earlier, my state suffered because nationalised banks after mobilising private savings in the state, chose to invest them outside Madhya Pradesh. Things have improved slightly of late."

Many of the fiscal demands at Bangalore reflected issues first formulated cogently by a committee set up in 1969 by Tamil Nadu's then Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government. The Rajamannar Committee's recommendations in 1971, ignored for over a decade, now found an echo in the demands of the southern chief ministers. In essence, the complaint is that the tax structure is weighted in favour of the Centre, which has kept to itself the most lucrative tax weapons (excise and customs duties, and the corporation tax), while the states got thin gruel. Not just that, the states have increasingly been done out of their due share of revenues.

Sripat Mishra
Uttar Pradesh

"They have differentiated between the north and the south—an ideological division which is fraught with danger."

The Bangalore meet demanded:

- ▶ the setting up of a fiscal commission with state representation to review Centre-state fiscal relations and suggest a more equitable distribution of resources;
- ▶ state resources should be increased by the Centre sharing its revenue from the corporation tax and surcharge on income tax (income tax already goes largely to the states);
- ▶ resource transfer from the Centre to the states should not be at the Centre's discretion, but mandated;
- ▶ other demands included access for the states to loans from the Reserve Bank and the term-lending financial institutions.

Precisely these issues were enunciated quite independently last fortnight in another forum by another non-Congress(I) state government—West Bengal—in its memorandum to the 8th Finance Commission. West Bengal pointed out that income tax paid by companies used to be shared with the states till 1959, when the Centre re-named it as the corporation tax (which is not divisible under the Constitution): The sales tax on inter-state movement of goods was first taken out of the states' purview and then fi per cent; and royalty rates on raw mined from the states (as for oil have been kept unreasonably low Centre has collected vast amount prices and taxes.

Central Funds: Under the Co Central transfers to the states are d by finance commissions which are at five-year intervals. Increasingly, transfers have been effected thr Planning Commission, which was a Central executive order. Planni mission largesse is now much more funds apportioned by the finance sion, but, as the Rajamannar C pointed out, is also "discretionary, nal, and subject to fluctuations in th the Centre's own financial position

For all that, the states were p the mote in the Centre's eye while the beam in their own. Though their powers are limited, few states h them effectively, preferring instead overdrafts. Land revenue rates have raised for over 50 years, and more the states have simply abolished Taxing of agricultural income is a s ject, but is treated as untouchable

Darbara Singh
Punjab

"I want the states to e more proportionate sha funds from the financ institutions."

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

"We Are Not Anti-Centre"

LAST fortnight, Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde was in the limelight, as the host to three southern chief ministers, in Bangalore. Hegde spoke to Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA *about the controversial meeting. Excerpts:*

Q. *What was the main idea behind calling a meeting of southern chief ministers?*

A. The idea came to me when I met Rama Rao in the third week of February to ask him to supply power to my state, at the same time MGR wanted Ka to release some Cauvery water to crops in his state. It was then I why should we not meet to ideas and to discuss our problem from forming good relation could come closer in personal

Q. *Why didn't you invite states?*

A. Primarily because the are on a different footing Whereas the financial problems or less the same and I though good issue to start with.

Q. *Why did you decide council of chief ministers?*

A. There is provision Constitution to form a coun has never been constituted. Th

Madhavsinh Solanki
Gujarat

National Development (NDC) already exists to ur problem. If the state nts any change it can proach the NDC and e a healthy dialogue.”

of the money that is collected, or by the Centre. is squandered. The boards and transport corporations by the states lose hundreds of year; irrigation schemes do not their operational costs, let alone the capital cost through water and every year at least half the nounce no fresh taxes in their This year's list so far includes two of ments represented at Bangalore, ra Pradesh and Pondicherry third–Karnataka–gave out Rs tax relief while collecting only Rs fresh taxes. Other tax-free states include Assam, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The budget deficit has crossed Rs. 500 of it contributed by the south!). Rajamannar Committee, with its Centre bias, explained this kind of with a charming insouciance: ce on the Centre's charity makes the states ... develop a ten- to take any responsibility but to blame on the Centre for their faults."

IF THE Bangalore summit gave a boost to those who favour a greater decentralisation of powers, the Congress(I) has only itself to blame. Over the years there has been a growing tendency to concentrate power at the Centre. There would have been no need for the meeting at all if the zonal councils set up during Jawaharlal Nehru's time, at the initiative of the then home minister Govind Ballabh Pant, to involve the states in the planning process and enable them to resolve their differences at the local level, had not been allowed to rust and decay during Mrs Gandhi's time.

As it is, the zonal council meetings, convened by the Home Ministry in Delhi from time to time, have made no impact on any of the states. "If one takes a look at the agenda (of the zonal councils) one would be tempted to laugh," remarked Hegde. Even the National Development Council, which brings all chief ministers together at the capital, has become a forum in which issues that the Centre wants to discuss are put on the agenda.

But what was striking during this meeting was that none of the bilateral problems were discussed. The standing dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the two main contenders for the sharing of the Cauvery waters, was not discussed at all. Even if Chief Minister K. Karunakaran had attended, it is doubtful that he would have broached the Kasargod dispute with Hegde; as soon as Karunakaran announced that he was not attending, Hegde told the Assembly that Karnataka would fight for the border town which the Mahajan Commission had awarded to it earlier. The only conciliatory gesture came when Hegde, shortly before the meeting, released three million cu ft of water to Tamil Nadu for drought-stricken Thanjavur.

Disparities: Another imponderable is Ramachandran's sudden shift in loyalty, especially where the Congress(I) is concerned. At present he is upset at the way the Centre dealt with him during Tamil Nadu's rice shortage. While Kerala, which has a Congress(I) chief minister, had no difficulty in getting a monthly allotment of 95,000 tonnes of rice from the Central pool to keep its rationing system going, Tamil Nadu, which has a much larger population, was able to get only 5,000 tonnes for April after no allotments at all in the preceding six months and that too after Ramachandran went on a seven-hour fast

Bhajan Lal
Haryana

“The formation of the council of southern chief ministers is uncalled for. The Centre has to be strong so that it can solve Centre-state or intra-state problems. A weak Centre cannot look after the interests of the states.”

The fact that the southern states are themselves not united on several issues and are bogged down by inter-state disputes could act as an obstacle to the success of the council of chief ministers. The growing language chauvinism is one of the dangers to a unified southern movement. After a sustained agitation, Karnataka has been forced to make Kannada the sole first language in the educational syllabus, even though it is not the mother tongue of the entire population in the state. This has already caused resentment among neighbouring states.

It isn't clear how the southern initiative will shape up. At the moment, there are no concrete plans for follow-up; nor are Congress(I) chief ministers very enthused. For the moment, the participants at the Bangalore conclave are determined to tread cautiously for they realise the path is politically mined. Though there will be no formal institutional arrangement, the four chief secretaries of the participating states will meet from time to time to see if problems of the southern states can be resolved through their own cooperative effort without having to depend on the Centre. And if they can show some progress even in purely bilateral terms, their effort will not have been in vain.

ment Council meets seldom and is ineffective. The chief ministers do any opportunity to views on various except on financial s. The council of chief ters is designed to discuss and solve our bilateral multilateral problems es instead of bothering the Centre for all these

Q. Why were no bilateral problems ed during the meeting?

A. We found no time to take up many But we are going to meet again month or two to discuss them. This was mainly to discuss our approach to the Finance Commission.

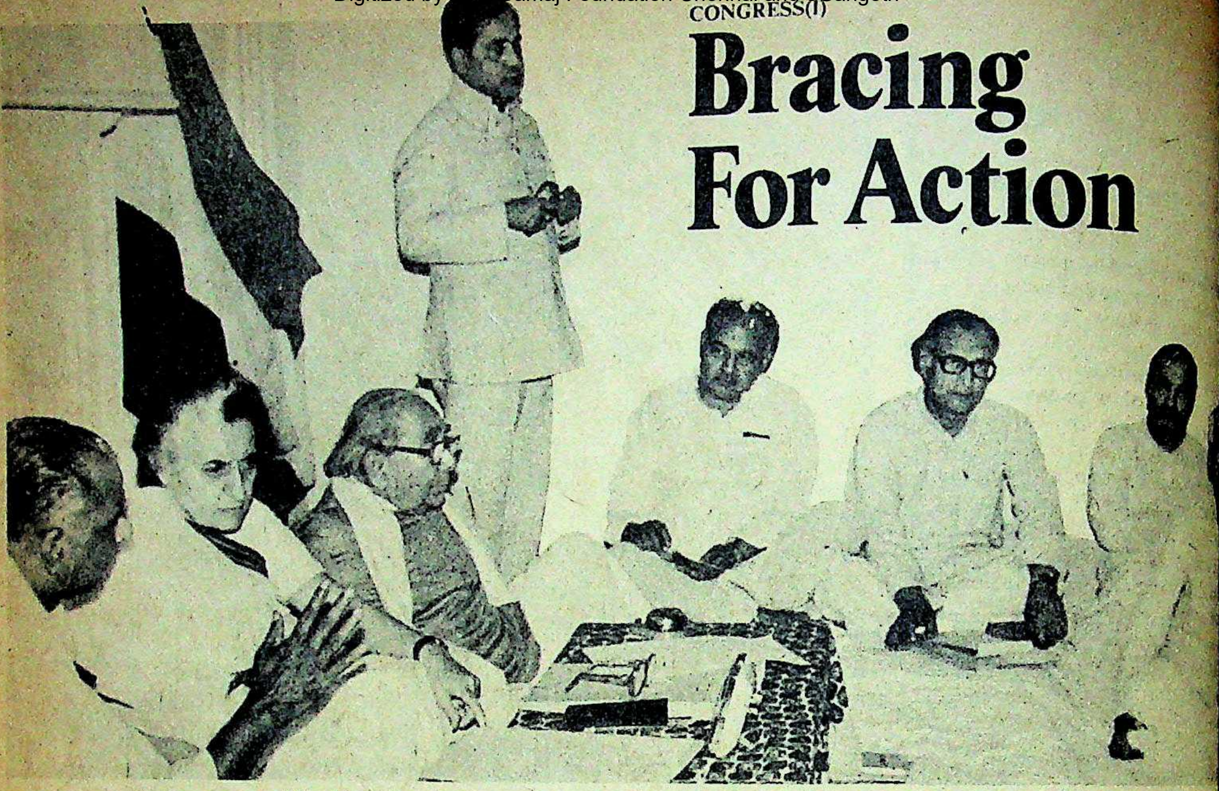
Hegde: seeking common ground

Q. What you have called for seems to be greater financial and administrative autonomy for states and less of central interference.

A. No. There will be no curtailment of the Union Government's powers. What we have asked for is a review of Centre-state relationships which I think is necessary. In several matters the powers of the state Government have been taken over by the Central Government especially in taxation and law making, with the consequence that even in legitimate spheres we have to look to the Centre for clearance and approval. We are only calling for a review. We are not anti-Centre.

CONGRESS(I)

Bracing For Action



Mrs Gandhi and party leaders at an AICC(I) meeting: back to the grass roots

Senior Congress(I) leaders stoutly maintain that the effort to rejuvenate the state units of the party is part of a long-term strategy. But these protestations are taken with a pinch of salt by political pundits who have veered round to the view that Mrs Gandhi is toying with the idea of holding a mid-term poll.

IT HAS all the signs of a great revival. A stream of orders pours forth from the newly refurbished All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) headquarters on Akbar Road, aimed at the state units of the party. A word from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the five AICC(I) general secretaries, the 25 pradesh committee chiefs and over 350 district office-bearers, not to speak of 100 MP's are suddenly galvanised into activity. And on March 27, when Rajiv Gandhi completed a 14 km padayatra in Bombay's sprawling Dharavi slum, the party's mass contact programmes in the 350-odd districts of India appeared to have come to a satisfactory conclusion. Said General Secretary G.K. Moopanar: "We are a political party after all and keeping touch with the masses is our ultimate objective. Otherwise who will vote for us?"

Is the Congress(I)'s sudden flurry of activity a prelude to a snap parliamentary poll or is it the much promised attempt to revitalise a party whose roots have been eaten up a long time ago? Senior Congress(I) leaders stoutly maintain that the effort to rejuvenate the state units of the party is part of a long-term strategy. But these protestations are taken with a pinch of salt by political pundits in the capital who have veered round to the view that Mrs Gandhi is toying with the idea of holding a mid-term poll.

Crucial Meeting: Speculation was particularly fuelled by Mrs Gandhi's decision to hold a conference of Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (PCC-I) chiefs on March 18 and 19 in New Delhi. In all her years in power Mrs Gandhi has never felt it necessary to hold such a meeting before. In her speech too Mrs Gandhi repeatedly drummed home the importance of the party's membership drive and the need for field work.

The PCC(I) chiefs were also told to put into action a 10-week programme which, if implemented properly, should bring Congress(I) workers into contact with over 160 million of the estimated 350 million voters. Each state has also been asked to hold block, district and state level c ces of Congress(I) wo fore the monsoon, a training camps for the workers. Senior Centra like Mrs Gandhi, Raji and Working Preside lapati Tripathi will be at such meetings. P ress(I) social scientists being called upon to f in on the party's ideolo party Treasurer Sita sari: "We will soon b cadre-based party."

The larger politically impor —Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Prade Rajasthan, Haryana, Maharas Andhra Pradesh— are the focus attention. Says Sukhdev Prashad, t uming president of the Uttar Pra gress Committee(I): "With 40 la gress(I) members our main respo to find work for each worker. We this massive manpower to some co use. Otherwise they will become r create problems for the party."

Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv will be attention on the gargantuan state Pradesh which sends 85 MP's to Sabha. In the next 10 weeks they over a dozen meetings in the state. 16 Rajiv will address a divisional C ference at Ghaziabad. One week ll be back to inaugurate the first tion of over 5,000 gram sabhapa- know. On April 30 he will be in o inaugurate a conference of over rkers from all over the state. On s Gandhi will be present in person ing ceremony which will be followed by a massive public meeting.

ficant Step: One person who will rticularly crowded schedule in the onths is Rajiv. In addition to his other states, he has also begun his own constituency, Amethi, more e organised a padayatra in the y last month. In addition to this k the significant step of appoint- e to supervise booth-wise polling. second line of Congress(I) leaders e on the move during the next few Tripathi kicked off by addressing a (I) workers meeting on the 20-point e in Meerut. The other four party secretaries—Rajendra Kumari Baj- Stephen, Moopanar and Chandu- rakar will be checking on organi- work.

fforts to pump life back into the (I) are stepped up, parallel moves revive the Indian Youth Cong- (I). In fact party leaders began by ing first on the on after the Banga- ention of the IYC(I) ry 1982, various s were asked to committed young- holding training After completing camps, a six-week camp concluded h in New Delhi. rkers also took out s from all over the which are to culminate in a massive youth rally Delhi. Says IYC(I) Tariq Ali: "Our endeavour is to re and more clean and honest ople into our fold. A political party de stronger if it has the solid sup- committed army of young people."

Rajiv: crowded schedule

HILE the party oils its rusty ma- chinery the Central Government and the Congress(I)-ruled states pushing through budgets which a good crop at the hustings. nance Minister Pranab Mukherjee a deficit budget but held back and roduce drastic new taxes which n the common man. The finance of the Congress(I)-ruled states— Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan—took their cue from Mukherjee and did not impose additional taxes on essential commodities. All the states took care to dole out massive amounts for the 20-point programme, Harijan welfare and civic amenities slum areas.

In their enthusiasm for populist measures some states have thrown the advice of the Planning Commission to the winds. For example, it had suggested that Himachal Pradesh should mobilise an extra Rs 53 crore for the Sixth Plan. Instead, state Chief Minister Ram Lal refrained from imposing any fresh taxes and presented a Rs 62 lakh deficit budget for 1982–83. He also resorted to several populist measures and announced the abolition of fees for all children born in the state. The budget also dropped the water cess from public hydrants.

In a series of other moves the budget also exempted cultural and dramatic performances in the state from entertainment tax. Ram Lal tried to woo government servants by allowing all employees earning over Rs 600 to claim first class railway fares while on duty. Interestingly, of the Rs 143 crore plan Ram Lal allocated Rs 105 crore for the implementation of the prime minister's new 20-point economic programme.

Huge Deficits: Neighbouring Haryana was up to the same game. State Finance Minister Katar Singh showed little qualms about presenting a whopping deficit of Rs 57.13 crore out of a total non-plan outlay of Rs 350 crore. The budget took no new steps except to impose a marginal tax of Rs 15 crore on luxuries. In order to woo the affluent peasants who support Charan Singh the state Government raised the limit on loans from Rs 60,000 to Rs 1 lakh for the levy of stamp duty. To win over the state's government employees the Government also ordered that six towns be upgraded from B category to A and nine towns from C to B. The administration order will benefit over a lakh government employees who will now receive enhanced house rent allowances.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state Government has stood up to the sugar lobby pressure for reducing the minimum price for sugar-cane. The industry had been pushing strongly to have the sugar-cane price lowered from Rs 16 of Rs 12 because of the glut in the market. Riot-torn Assam did not impose any new taxes. In Maharashtra, the Central Government has given its approval for basic civic amenities to over five lakh squatters on the land surrounding Santa Cruz Airport.

Another conspicuous feature of all the budgets was the increase in expenditure of Rs 500 crore—a 33 per cent increase over the previous year—on Harijans and weaker sections. All Congress(I)-ruled states have been asked to speed up the allotment of house sites and agricultural land to Harijans and weaker sections. Banks have been directed to grant loans to jobless youths liberally. According to Finance Ministry sources, over Rs 500 crore will be distributed to unemployed and disabled persons during the next one year to help them start in new jobs.

Mrs Gandhi, it seems, has left the matter to the sole discretion of the chief ministers. She has called a meeting on April 5 to review the progress of the 20-point programme. She has already despatched senior Central Government officials to various states tc make an on the spot study of the programme. Annoyed with the slow progress in some northern states, she directed Planning Minister S.B. Chavan to pull up these states. Admits a senior Planning Commission official: "Never before has she monitored the progress of any programme so minutely."

Dissident Activity: But there is an acute awareness that Mrs Gandhi's efforts will yield dividends only if she can contain dissidence. Defiance of the state leadership reached new heights in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat when Congress(I) MLA's took sides with the Opposition on some issues. Says Tripathi: "The floor of the legislature is not a party forum. Inside the Assembly, Congress(I) MLA's are expected to behave like disciplined soldiers of the party." Mrs Gandhi also has to decide, before settling for a snap poll, whether to sack controversial and inefficient chief ministers.

Mrs Gandhi's desire that targets should be met and the party strengthened can be well understood in the wake of the defeats in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. However she is said to be banking on the fact that the north which has over 350 seats in the Lok Sabha has stayed solidly behind her since 1980 except in Madhya Pradesh. Her victory in Delhi has also given her confidence about facing the electorate. The prime minister is also doing her best to ensure that the minorities do not abandon her this time. She has appointed a minority advisory panel, accepted the religious demands of the Akalis, and visited both Meerut and Baroda when they were rocked by communal violence.

If she does order a mid-term poll Mrs Gandhi will only be running true to form. She dissolved the Lok Sabha in 1971 when it still had one year to run. She has in the past been adept at springing political surprises. And while the risks in a mid-term poll cannot be underestimated, Mrs Gandhi has never been one to shy away from taking risks.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

MANEKA GANDHI

A Coming Out Party

HOARY politicians have generally dismissed her as a transient presence on the political scene. But last fortnight, Maneka Gandhi, the prime minister's estranged daughter-in-law, was making a spirited bid to hold her own. Bracing herself for snap mid-term elections which she feels are round the corner, her new political party, the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch (RSM) was all prepared for its formal debut on April 3.

Maneka, president of the party to be, explains the birth of RSM as an attempt to contain the swelling popularity and membership of the Sanjay Vichar Manch (SVM) which could no longer be accommodated within Sanjay Gandhi's five-point programme. However, SVM will continue as the party's youth wing.

With all the requisite organisational trappings—an executive committee; a 10-page manifesto; and a saffron, green and white party flag with the map of India in the centre—the RSM intends to be firmly centrist. Maneka maintains that alliance with neither the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nor the communists is likely. The manifesto emphasises the need for action on unemployment and corruption. It calls for greater freedom for private enterprise, rationalisation of the tax structure and radical reforms in education to make it more technically oriented. Some 5,000 participants are expected to attend the inaugural convention in Delhi.

Party Standing: So far, the SVM has two MP's, including former deputy finance minister Maganbhai Barot, two MLA's from Uttar Pradesh, one from Bihar and four from Andhra Pradesh. Maneka has firmly countered charges that she won the impressive four out of five seats contested in Andhra Pradesh entirely on N.T. Rama Rao's coat-tails, by pointing out that SVM victory margins were 15 per cent higher than other winners in Telangana, where Mrs Gandhi won equal number of seats as the Telugu Desam. According to her, the subsequent Delhi elections went uncontested because the SVM lacked a party symbol—a handicap the new RSM has got around.

Maneka has been at pains to establish that she is no political dilettante. Twenty days a month, she has been systematically touring the country, building up her organisation, attracting unusually large crowds in diverse towns such as Muzaffarpur, Baroda, Karnal and Nagpur. While curiosity has been a useful crowd puller, she has not been slow to learn the tricks of the political game.

Her public appearances have been shrewdly stage-managed, with carefully chosen clothes and studied mannerisms to suit audiences. Head covered demurely, her speeches have been pointed. "I came to Amethi as a bride, now I come to you with folded hands as a widow," she said at her husband's former constituency, now represented by brother-in-law Rajiv Gandhi. The reins of her party firmly in her hands, she says determinedly: "Actually we are a very democratic party and discuss amongst ourselves freely, but the workers should remember that I am the leader."

Repercussions: What has made Maneka particularly irksome to the ruling party is her potential for making mischief among disgruntled Sanjaymen in its ranks. While few of her late husband's senior supporters have joined her, many who had been sidelined within the Congress(I) since Sanjay's death, have been hastily rehabilitated after the formation of the SVM. Ever since the announcement of her decision to contest election from Amethi, sitting MP Rajiv Gandhi seems to have taken renewed interest in his constituency.

Despite charges that she is flush with funds, Maneka insists that her organisation runs on a shoe-string budget. Says she: "My funds come in trickles from small donations and total up from Rs 100 to Rs 150 a day." With politics a full-time business, she has little time for Rajdhani Traders, the trucking company she heads. Already 10 of the 22 trucks have been sold off. Maneka denies reports of a legal dispute over su Sanjay Gandhi's estate estimated a Rs 17 lakh. She says that in the ab will, a routine petition filed by her b left Safdarjung Road to claim le status for herself and her son Varun twisted out of context. Sanjay's es des shares worth Rs 14 lakh in Traders and two DDA shops in so

Maneka's political progress is favourably by many Emergency because of her anti-Mrs Gandhi sta K.R. Sunder Rajan, political com who was jailed during the Emerg appears from the Manch's stance a Bihar press bill and other forms of a rianism, that she is moving away Sanjay brand of politics." BJP lead Raje Scindia also says: "It is no launch a party on an all-India make it work. Maneka is a co person and deserves every encourag

Criticism: Nevertheless, the mation has been greeted with cynic capital's political circles. At pains to ciate himself from her, Jagdish Tytl ress(I) MP and Sanjay's friend, says ka's party will never take off. I do Maneka ever had an idea of th Sanjay was fighting for." Even Ma davate, Janata MP, feels: "Maneka which is sought to be built on the s her personality cult as a counter to minister's, without any concrete p programmes, has no future." Atte explain the attention that Maneka nued to hold, veteran journali Chakravartty remarks: "These come up because of the messy poli country. One would have hoped th grown out of the adolescent frolics politics. Maneka is a creature of the

Maneka, however, is vehem insistence that "Sanjay stood for and *makan* and so do I. The only perhaps is the peculiar style of putting loyal efficiency in a mann borders on the p Strongly challenging sments that she is a lightweight, Maneka haven't seen any bub longer than a few we people are insulting the gence of the lakhs joined my party. I d derstand this term lightweight' when so with parties of just and a following of six are regarded as polit weights and given a p tional committees."

—CO

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Maneka Gandhi in her office: quick to learn

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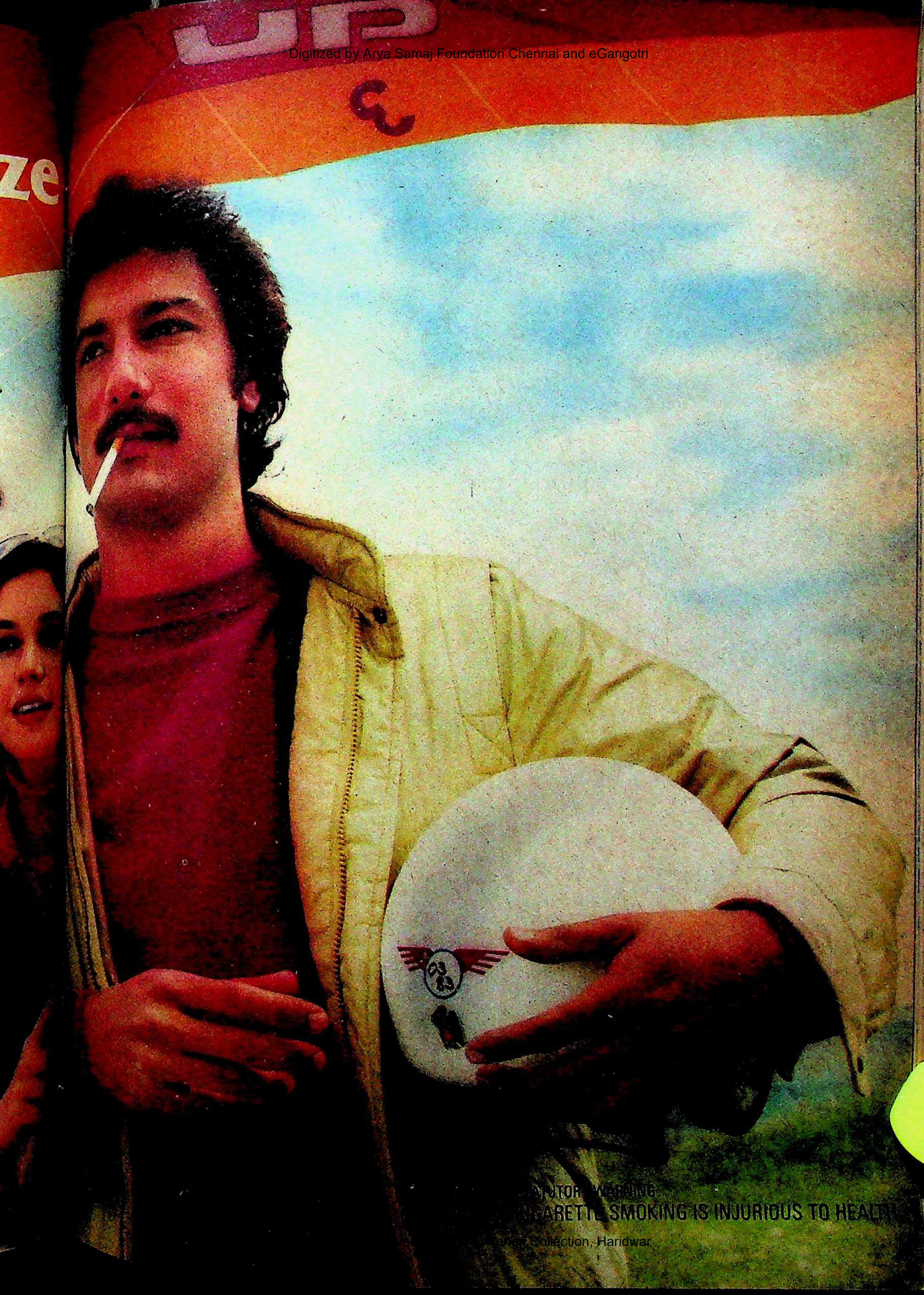

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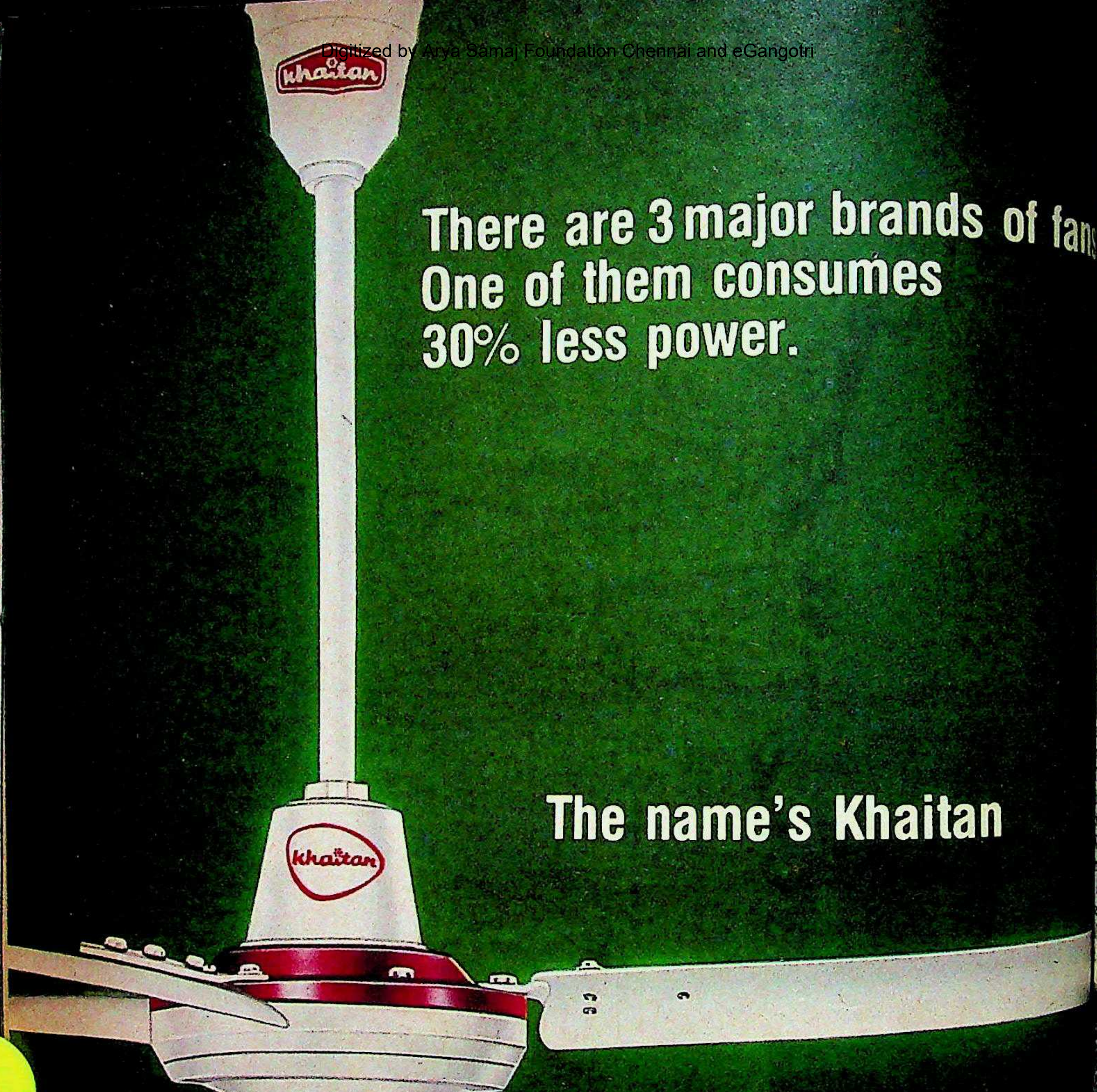

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bracadabra

IF IT was music last year, it is magic this year. Last fortnight, a miracle rain-maker, Thomas Jacob was summoned from Kerala to bring rains to the parched city of Madras. Last year, musician di Vaidyanathan was invited to violin to invoke the rain gods. It is the Madras Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board (Metrowater the state Government organisation of water supply to the metropolis, no stone unturned in order to bring the thirsty city.

Madras needs that water badly. in the city have been getting even mally rationed and scarce supply e in five days. To deal with this, the ater Board has dug borewells and to supply water through tankers to eas. Last year, student hostels had ated during the summer vacation the water tapes were running dry. the situation is much worse.

much-sought miracle man is y employee of the Changanassery of the State Bank of Travancore, yam in Kerala. Jacob came into ght during the last three months, claimed credit for a few early showers in parched Kottayam. On vitation from the Metrowater took a fortnight's leave from his bank to use his powers to provide relief to the citizens of Madras. He arrived in Madras on March 15 along with his wife who is also his rain-making partner.

Making Rain: The next day, he met T.K.A. Dewan Mohamed, managing director of the Metrowater Board and other senior officials. Later, superintending engineers of the board took him to the Red Hills Lake so he could study the wind direction and other atmospheric conditions, preparatory to his experiments. Even before the rain-maker began his experiments, the city had traces of rain on the night of March 21.

Jacob, however, doesn't claim to perform miracles. He says that he has worked out a scientific method of inducing rainfall. He uses a telephone or a hand-held transmitter to send out electronic impulses which, he claims, generate a low-pressure area, an atmospheric condition that naturally brings about rain. But a basic knowledge of science defies any scientific relation between the radiation of electronic impulses and the building up of a low-pressure area; because a low-pressure atmospheric condition cannot, logically speaking, be generated by sending out electronic signals. But apparently Metrowater Board doesn't consider it necessary to go into the logic of Jacob's theory. It is game to try out any claim of bringing rains to the city.

Only last month, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, did some painstaking laboratory research on preventing water evaporation (*see* INDIA TODAY, February 28), and suggested to the Metrowater Board a cheap method of conserving nearly 15 million litres of water—which are lost every day due to evaporation from Red Hills—by spreading a layer of cetyl alcohol on the water surface. Instead of immediately trying this out, senior officers of the board subjected the professors and other officers of the IIT to repeated sessions of rigorous cross-examination.

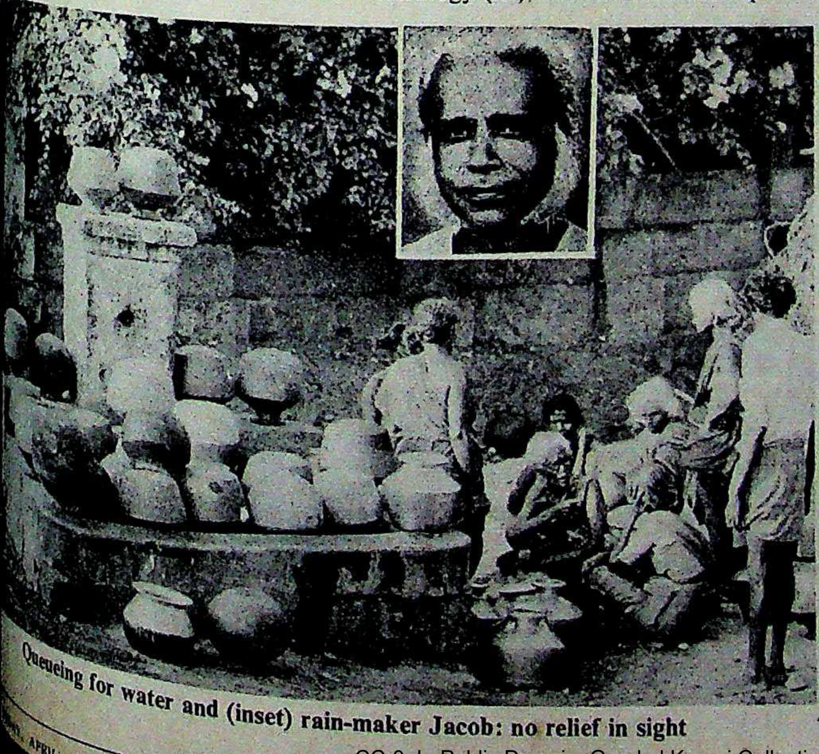
Scientific Plan: Dewan Mohamed drove home the point that "Metrowater Board has sanctioned Rs 3 lakh for this programme to be carried out by the IIT in collaboration with the Institute of Hydrology and Hydraulics, Poondi," the place where another water reservoir catering to Madras is located. The experiment is going to be carried out at the Poondi reservoir itself, instead of Red Hills. But by the time the organisations involved get down to the actual task, precious little water may be left to be conserved.

To draw a red herring before the press, Metrowater tactically leaked out a story that Jacob had come to Madras at the invitation of Joseph Kurien, the managing director of Madras Fertilisers Ltd, which is plagued by a severe water problem. However, Kurien himself was away in Delhi and the US after the rain-maker's arrival in Madras.

But embarrassed by Metrowater Board's inability to tackle the water problem in a scientific manner, senior board officials refuse to own up to the fact that they invited the rain-maker to try and solve the problem. Jacob's whereabouts in Madras and the experiments he is planning in the city both remain top secret. After chasing the miracle man for over a week, one journalist remarked: "I wonder which is more elusive, rain or the rain-maker."

Meanwhile, rain-maker or not, it is a daily battle for survival in Madras, with the searing heat, the painfully dry taps, the endless queue, fisticuffs and brawls before tankers rationing out the elixir of life to people dying for a drop of it. Despite all efforts, rain seems nowhere in sight. The findings of recent research by S.D. Williams, a meteorologist at the Nungambakkam Observatory, on the behaviour of north-east and south-west monsoons in Tamil Nadu in the last 75 years, show that "there have been more droughts than excess rainfall years during this period." Yet another depressing finding is that "the north-east monsoon... failed for four consecutive years in Tamil Nadu from 1947". With such findings, it is difficult to detect even a drop of water at the end of the dry well that is Madras.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI



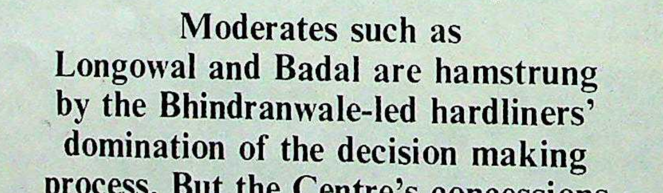
Queueing for water and (inset) rain-maker Jacob: no relief in sight

PUNJAB

The Tension Mounts

Longowal (left) and Bhindranwale: differing stands

> Moderates such as Longowal and Badal are hamstrung by the Bhindranwale-led hardliners' domination of the decision making process. But the Centre's concessions are likely to loosen the militant Sant's hold and aid the moderates to take a firm stand.



Sethi (left) and Darbara Singh: sharp reaction

THE TIMING was just right. Last fortnight, when Mrs Gandhi appointed the Sarkaria Commission to inquire into Centre-state relations in the wake of the Bangalore meeting of four southern non-Congress(I) chief ministers, her move was also aimed at taking the wind out of the Akali sails. In fact the Anandpur Sahib resolution dealing with Centre-state relations was on the top of the Akalis' 45-point charter of religious, economic and political demands. However, pre-empting the Akalis from making any political mileage from her decision, Mrs Gandhi refrained from associating their demands with her statement.

Coming in a climate of mounting tension, the move follows Mrs Gandhi's earlier acceptance of the religious demands (INDIA TODAY, March 31) of the 18-month-old Akali tangle which caused a loss of Rs 30 crore and deaths of over 125 people in 300 cases of violence. Against the gory backdrop of sporadic killings, the Akali leadership has decided to launch the final phase of their movement from April 4. Over a lakh workers will participate in a *rasta roko* agitation to block all transport from plying on Punjab's roads. In addition, they also plan to pressurise non-Akali MLA's to tender their resignations. Notable instances of the recent violence include:

► March 16: The extremist bomb attack on a police party on the Amritsar-Jullundur Grand Trunk Road, which seriously injured Amritsar's Superintendent of Police A.P. Pandey. While one assailant was killed in the ensuing police encounter, the rest took refuge in Guru Nanak Niwas.

► March 21: In three separate instances five unidentified Sikhs gunned down a Nirankari, Jarnail Singh, in Kapurthala district; extremists attacked and injured 12 shopkeepers in Gurdaspur district, while one of them posing as a Nihang was drowned in a while escaping; and a temple priest bullet injuries in Harchowal village i daspur.

► March 23: Two hand- des thrown at the residenc tiala Additional Session Judge K.K. Garg, one of exploded and damag window panes in a room.

► March 23: Mehma S former Nirankari and an ver in the Nirankari Baba case was shot dead in Mo two persons riding a moto

► March 24: Five police plainclothes on duty at G Temple, were allegedly he tive by the extremists for hours before being let of interrogation.

Hard Pressed: The Government's recent mov pushed the moderates wi Akali leadership into a ti ner. While Harchand Longowal guardedly we the Sarkaria Commissi continued to maintain a silence over the party's a nal programme. Clearly m tes such as Longowal an kash Singh Badal are ham by the Bhindranwale-led ners' domination of the d making process. But the C concessions are likely to the militant Sant's hold the moderates to take stand on the future c action.

Earlier, Mrs Gand forts to isolate extrem ments were supported tionally by all political g cluding the communis tone was set by Union H nister P.C. Sethi in his rep Lok Sabha calling motion on Punjab last f Said he: "A request was Akali leaders that there unequivocal and open nation of violence, and circumstances gur should not be used as s for criminals. It is un that the Shiromani G Prabandhak Committe Shiromani Akali Dal have not come out wit demnation of such a taken effective steps to to the use of gurudw criminals as their re a tactical follow-up, Bhindranwale followers who have been camping in sar since July 1982 were also attacked Congress(I) MP G.S. Nihalsingh- Said he: "Guru Nanak Niwas is not of the gurudwara. The Government make this clear to everybody. I want what action has been taken against who enter Guru Nanak Niwas after innocent people." In a blistering Nihalsinghwala also accused Darbara of inaction against criminal elements demanded the immediate arrest of criminals hiding in Guru Nanak

Religious Sanctuary: Similar sentiments echoed in the Punjab Assembly and an anguished Darbara Singh to desperately: "My patience is exhaus- the Akalis and Sant Harchand Singh say that Guru Nanak Niwas is not of the Golden Temple and then see happens. It will not take more than half for the police to ferret out the extre- the arms and ammunition from the " In fact, the chief minister had directed the police officials to initiate measures in order to secure the of arms from Bhindranwale and followers.

The chorus of protest has evinced a varied response. While Longowal and the moderates insist that "both Guru Ram Das Niwas and Guru Nanak Niwas are part of the Golden Temple complex," they are not opposed to the arms surrender. Bhindranwale, however, reacted violently and said: "Religious-minded Sikhs are being deliberately murdered by the police." The militant leader has further alleged that the Amritsar police encounter "was a cold-blooded murder of my follower".

Notable among the other issues that hinder the final resolution of the Akali problem are the transfer of Chandigarh and the sharing of the Sutlej-Beas waters. On the Chandigarh issue, Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal has already agreed to share the Union Territory with Punjab on a 60:40 basis. Congress(I) sources also indicated that Mrs Gandhi would be agreeable to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab after the Akalis withdraw their agitation, since she wished to abstain from an essentially inter-state dispute.

The earlier suggestion, made at the tripartite meeting of Akalis, opposition leaders and government officials, that both issues be amicably resolved between the concerned states, was turned down by the Akalis. The talks finally broke down when the Akalis were adamant about the acceptance of their demands.

Face-saving Gesture: The current problem centres firmly around the recommencement of the negotiations. While willing Akalis are awaiting a formal invitation, the Central Government continues to be peeved by the Akali's refusal to withdraw their resignations from the Punjab Assembly and both the houses of Parliament. A face-saving device has been provided by 11 leaders of major opposition groups who have urged the Government to initiate a fresh round of talks. Home Minister Sethi is expected to react favourably to the opposition leaders' request.

But Mrs Gandhi's major worry remains the restoration of normalcy to the sensitive Punjab state. While the Government has shown magnanimity by not accepting the valid resignation letters, hawks in the Akali Dal have construed this as its weakness. As a Congress(I) leader from Punjab said confidently: "This is our last offer. If it is not accepted, our leader knows how to handle them, because she has the people behind her."

—PRABHU CHAWLA with GOBIND THUKRAL in Chandigarh

RAPE

Delayed Action

Every two hours a rape occurs somewhere in India. Chances are six out of seven that the rapist will get away with his crime. But despite repeated public protests, the 1860 rape law is yet to be suitably amended to ensure that the culprit is convicted and the victim is helped. Last month, participants of a national seminar on rape organised by the Mahila Dakshata Samiti in the capital deplored the inordinate delay by Parliament in passing a bill introduced in December 1980 to amend the rape law and also recommended other crucial reforms to be included in it.

Ever since 1979, when the open letter to the Supreme Court in the Mathura rape case led to a public outcry, women's organisations have been pressing for amendments in the 1860 rape law. In the Mathura case, the Supreme Court set free two policemen accused of raping 16-year-old Mathura in a police station, even though it was conceded that intercourse had occurred at the thana. An eventual review of the case did not lead to conviction, but it did temporarily jolt the Government out of its lethargy. In April 1980, the Law Commission suggested major changes to amend the law and in December the bill to amend the rape law was introduced in Parliament.

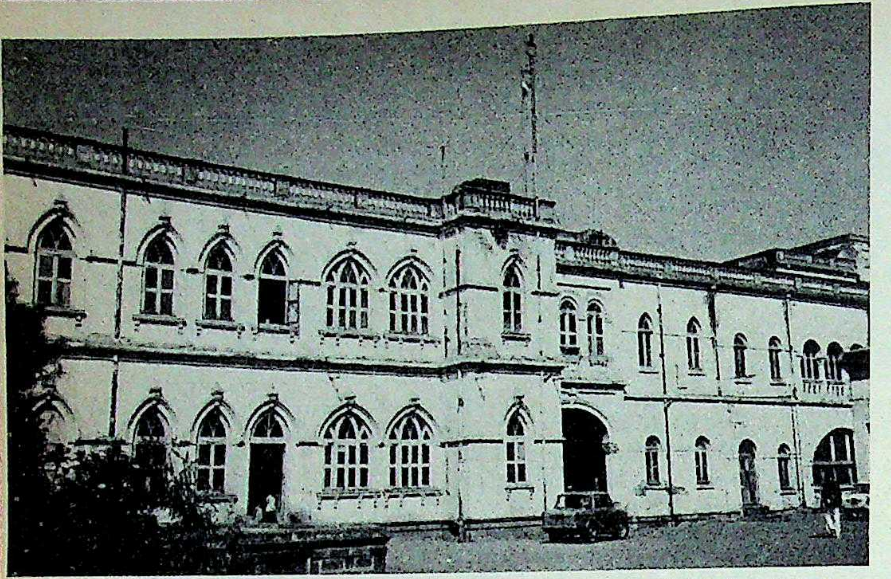
But more than two years later, not only is the bill yet to become an act, but many of the crucial reform measures suggested by a joint committee of Parliament have been left out. Says Lotika Sarkar, professor of Delhi University, and one of the four who wrote the open letter to the Supreme Court in 1979: "All the preventive measures suggested have been ignored by the bill." Admits Janata Party MP Era Sezhiyan, who was a member of the joint committee of Parliament which studied the bill: "It is an inadequate bill." But Sezhiyan says that it is not possible to incorporate any other measures now, because the joint committee cannot amend the bill since all suggestions must be handed to the Law Commission before the bill is introduced in Parliament. The joint committee's recommendations can now only be incorporated in some future bill.

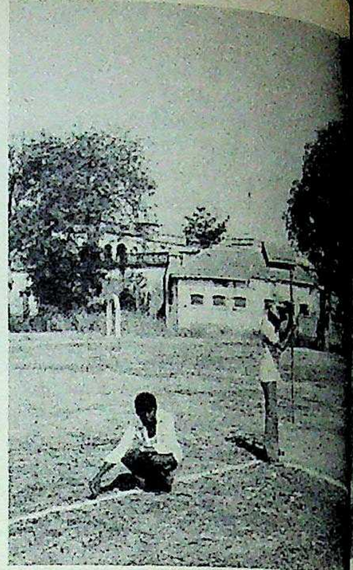
Crucial Reforms: Among the reform measures that have been left out of the present bill is the proposed amendment to Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, to make it mandatory that women not be arrested between sunset and sunrise; that a separate lock-up be kept for women; that a woman interrogated at a police station have a relative there with her; and that a rape victim not be cross-questioned about her past on the witness stand, because a standard tactic used by defence lawyers is to insinuate that the victim has an immoral character and must, therefore, have given her consent to the rape.

The commendable points of the bill are that it makes the onus of proof rest entirely on the man in cases of gang rape and custodial rape, as in hospitals, jails and police stations; it prescribes seven years imprisonment for those convicted of rape; and that a public servant who takes advantage of his position to seduce a junior female employee be prosecuted and punished with a five-year imprisonment.

But until the bill is discussed and passed in Parliament, everything remains unchanged. Accusing the Government of callousness and complacency in handling the bill, women's organisations have been trying to draw attention to the problem. Last November, Sezhiyan urged the Government to allot a few hours in Parliament to discuss the issue, but there was no response. And it seems unlikely that it will receive attention even during the present budget session.

—COOMI KAPOOR





Ranjit Vilas Palace (above); a plot being marked out for auction (right) and Jadeja: political row

GUJARAT

Palace Intrigue

WHEN the Income Tax Department auctioned the property of state Civil Supplies and Health Minister Manoharsinh Jadeja to recover dues of Rs 65 lakh, they probably did not realise that they would be triggering such a rip-roaring political row. The vocal dissident lobby has been quick to accuse Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki of singling out Jadeja, who is an eloquent critic of the Government, for specially harsh treatment. They also threw in the charge that Solanki's men were trying to make political capital of the affair by trying to make out that Jadeja was a tax defaulter who was deliberately not paying his dues.

Solanki also probably did not expect that the sale would have such a big fallout. Jadeja's late father was once the ruler of the princely state of Rajkot and he still commands fair clout in the region. And as the row over the auction escalated, it was clear that the Government's moves had won him a lot of sympathy, even in the ruling party. Over 50 members from Rajkot have sought permission from Mrs Gandhi to resign from their elected posts.

Strong Reactions: The party's city unit also reacted to the sale by passing a resolution on the eve of the auction demanding that Jadeja be given permission to sell the land, something that has been denied to him for several years because the land comes under the urban ceiling legislation, a matter handled by the chief minister himself. Selling the land would have enabled Jadeja to get the best commercial terms instead of losing it to the Income Tax Department to auction.

The resolution said permission was not being granted because of "vindictive attitudes" and groupism in the party. Said Manibhai Ranpara, MLA from Rajkot, "I am going to resign from my Rajkot seat so as to respect public opinion which is very agitated because of the treatment meted out to Jadeja. This proves that the Government wants to see that Jadeja loses as much as possible." Ranpara also added that he and other leaders from Rajkot were planning to see Mrs Gandhi as soon as possible "to explain the politics behind the whole issue."

Taken aback by the row, Solanki has now tried to disown the actions of the Income Tax Department. He is now trying to make out that the Government was against the sale. One day before last fortnight's auction a notice was hastily put out asking the Income Tax Department not to proceed with it as the concerned land came under the Urban Land Ceiling Act (ULCA) and bidders who bought it would do so at their own risk. Reacting sharply to this the Income Tax Commissioner (Recovery) V. Sivasubramanium assured nervous bidders that he would go ahead with the sale as the state Government's stand was not based on law.

Solanki has also tried to escape criticism by saying: "There is no question of granting permission to Jadeja. If I give it to him today there will be hundreds of others tomorrow who will demand the same." He added: "The charge that I am not granting permission as

Jadeja is a dissident is baseless as I d
allow personal relationships to influe
administrative decisions."

The auction itself, held on Ma
and 22, witnessed unprecedented sc
violence. A group of bidders, most of
young men, went on a rampage topp
destal fans and flinging steel chairs ab
place. The auction was postponed
and was resumed only under heavy
guard. In the event, the auctioneer's
rose and fell 33 times, until a total of R
lakh had been realised to cover Jadeja's
The land had originally been parcelled
74 plots; the remaining 41 remain in Ja
possession.

Tax Troubles: Jadeja's troubles
been building up for many years now
the son of Pradhuyamansinh Jadeja
former ruler of Rajkot State and
the Ranjit Vilas Palace where the fam
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After the violence at the auction: strong feelings

d over 10,000 sq m. Soon after Indepen- e Jadeja's father practically gave away arbargadh to the Government at a to- nt of Re 1 a year and it now houses go- ent offices. Pradhuyamansinh then sh- to the Ranjit Vilas Palace. Till 1972 he ed a privy purse of Rs 2.84 lakh a year. rouble really began only after the purses were abolished in 1972. Prad- amansinh died leaving debts of over Rs h. At the time Ranjit Vilas Palace was pted from wealth tax on the ground t was the official residence of a former raja. However, in 1978 after a five-year the Income Tax Department woke up e fact that Jadeja was not entitled to a is tax exemption since he was not a e maharaja.

Jadeja, at this point found himself in a . He could not sell the palace land in t as it came under the ULCA. He had no major sources of income and made re- ed representations to the Government ermission to sell the land. This was not ed even though the Government had ower to grant permission to sell land if wner is in "distress".

nitially, the Revenue Secretary T.D. ar asked the Income Tax authorities ction off the Darbargadh which is occu- by the Government. But he hastily ged his stand saying that the land around Ranjit Vilas Palace could be auctioned d. The reason for his changed stand ear: The Government did not want to e the Darbargadh even though a spa- multi-storeyed office building had been Interestingly the Government has not paid the token rent of Re 1 for Darbar- since they occupied the building 33 ago. Though they did not want to part with the Darbargadh, officials suggested to Jadeja that he could save his palace land to which he attached sentimental value, by vacating the palace itself, and allowing it to be auctioned. Finally, when he did not agree to this, more than 5,727 sq m of land, once part of the royal garden, were auctioned off.

Political Reaction: Jadeja has not tried to hide his belief that the Government has been vindictive. He says: "I have made enough representations. I am only asking for justice, not alms. But if the Government wants to make political capital out of it, there is nothing I can do about it." He admits, however, that he is disturbed by the fact that such auctions will now become a regular feature as enormous amounts will have to be paid after each auction to pay the estate duty and a capital gains.

Solanki's supporters have lost no time in starting a campaign against Jadeja. Two MLA's, Mohammed Hussein Barejia, and Ramlal Ruplal, have demanded that Jadeja should resign for speaking out against the Government. Earlier, Jinabhai Darji, another of Solanki's supporters said that he would fast unto death if Jadeja was allowed to sell the land. Solanki has also let it be known that he is piqued by Jadeja's forthright statements criticising the Government's apathy in his case. Said Solanki: "Being a cabinet minister, he should not have publicly criticised the Government."

Besides this, the Government has also made a desperate bid to present its side of the case to MLA's by circulating a three-page cyclostyled note detailing the reasons why it did not allow Jadeja to sell his land. The note claims that Jadeja had assests worth more than his dues. Solanki also maintains that he could not make an exception in Jadeja's case as it would be an unhealthy precedent. But the fact remains that he told Jadeja a few days before the auction that he would grant permission only if he surrendered all his excess vacant land.

Regional Grouses: Solanki also now has to contend with the fact that the auction of Jadeja's land has been seen as one more in the list of Saurashtra's grievances. Saurashtra was formerly a separate state and the feeling still persists that it is deliberately neglected by the northern part of the state.

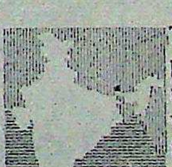
In addition to this Solanki has also upset the Kshatriya lobby which is powerful in Saurashtra as Jadeja was gradually emerging as a Kshatriya leader. The Kutch Katiawad Gujarati Garasia Association has recently put out a statement saying that Jadeja had carved a place in the hearts of the people of Rajkot and the auctioning of his royal property had hurt sentiments. The association claimed that Solanki was "not fulfilling his duty towards the Kshatriya community".

Apart from the occasional public outburst, Jadeja has tried to remain aloof from the controversy. His palace is badly dilapidated and he calmly accepts the present situation as a "process of social reformation." His son Mendhatasinh Jadeja, 19, says: "I do not know the politics of this auction, but I feel that the Government should have allowed the auction of the Darbargadh as it houses only offices. The land around the palace has sentimental value." But though Jadeja is trying to play down the issue, it appears that the rumpus created by the auction will take some time to die down. And other defaulters with tax dues and substantial property holdings can only wonder if the Jadeja case will set a precedent for the future.

—RAMESH MENON in Rajko

ASSAM

Still Smouldering



THE TEA warehouse that passes for a capital complex in Dispur was yet again agog with political activity last fortnight. Visible again were faces of long-lost politicians now back for the inaugura session of the state Assembly. But they did not exactly exude enthusiasm and nostalgia. There was apprehension in their eyes as they entered the Assembly complex, not too reassured even by the generous smattering of police sten-guns. Admitted one blushingly: "The 200-metre walk from the legislators hostel is in itself a security risk."

The plywood walls of the Assembly hal hardly shook as the session began on a sedate

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3BROTHERS

Mehrotra (left) and Saikia: all-pervasive optimism

March 21 while the Brahmaputra as again hit by agitators' non-coope- ll. All that the miniscule Opposition b was stage a walk-out as Prakash ra, whom they called "an irrespon- overnor", began his address. He less went on nonchalantly to des- uch to the surprise of even some ss(I) legislators, his government's mance in holding elections "creditable of the extraordinary circumstances".

precedented Deficit: But self-praise is ch to write home about and the stark bilities of the task that Chief Minister ar Saikia faces came to the fore as e Minister Mohammed Idris sought a e-account for six months on an abs- udget that showed an unprecedented f Rs 145.95 crore—left uncovered in ation of Central largesse. An embar- Idris also said that he was unable to a proper budget due to the working ast because of agitational activity.

he Government's inability to come up fuller budget was just one indication act that Saikia had disastrously failed p to his boast of restoring law and thin a month and resuming develop- activity. If he had reckoned the non- ation call on the opening day of the to be the test of his attempts to woo the same time intimidate government yees he had failed badly. They stayed om work in a manner reminiscent of ection fortnight.

le the Government spokesman better performance in maintenance tial services the chief minister's ligh- calls to North Block were being put by army jawans in the Gauhati Tele- Exchange. On the eve of the session had not so subtly stated that he would examine the employees' cases of past misdemeanour on the basis of their performance now. With the bait having been spurned so contemptuously there is every likelihood of an angry Saikia taking recourse to the roughshod methods he is known for.

Murderous Frenzy: But while the Assembly went through the motions tepidly news was being made elsewhere as hordes in Darrang broke into a fresh frenzy of violence and murder after a fortnight's breather. Unknown to the outside world it began on March 17 when an immigrant family of five was forced to board a country boat by spear-wielding youths. As the boat reached midstream the captors pounced on the family. Four jumped into the Brahmaputra but one was killed on the spot. Three others met a watery grave while one managed to swim across. The immigrants retaliated in kind at the same ferry-ghat two days later, attacking Assamese passengers in the ferry and killing at least nine.

As even at this stage the Government failed to come down on the violence firmly, three All Assam Students Union (AASU) leaders from Tezpur, including Upen Deka, the Anchalik unit president casually walked into Panpur to find out what had happened; they were ambushed and killed. The news reached the nearby Assamese township of Jamuguri and yet again raised the fearsome spectacle of armed Assamese on the rampage. The target was Laltapu Chapori, a *char* village inhabited by immigrant Muslims and Hindus. The toll: at least 43 killed. At least six of these were Assamese.

While the army was rushed in to prevent further trouble around curfew-bound Tezpur more disturbing news came in from lower Assam. Intelligence operatives watched perplexedly as half-burnt national flags came up all over Barpeta, Bongaigaon and Sorbhog and the posters stuck on the masts read in Assamese, intriguingly, "We will win our independence guaranteed by the Constitution." Said a police official: "We are still trying to work out the semantics of the slogan. But it is not the handiwork of anyone particularly loyal to the Constitution."

In upper Assam police reported sporadic recoveries of country-made weapons and crude explosive devices, besides coming up with evidence that the arrest at Tezpur earlier in the month of Arpan Bezbaruah, the so-called president of the Assam People's Liberation Army (APLA) did not mean the end of the rather loose-knit organisation. But the police top brass still maintain that the real force behind extremist activities was not APLA. "It is at best a feint," said an officer.

Internal Threats: With extremists still refusing to be subdued Saikia also faced fresh threats within his own party. Narendra Nath Talukdar, the irrepressible Assam Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (APCC-I) president began a whispering campaign that he personally launched in Delhi in the third week of March. An aspirant for the chief minister's post, Talukdar disdainfully turned down Saikia's offer of the speaker's post and, immediately on his return to Gauhati on the eve of the session, began preparing for a signature campaign against Saikia. Quipped a Congress(I) legislator: "Dissidence is a much safer game now. There is no opposition now." But his party's high command did not seem to agree with him and administered a stiff rebuke to Talukdar and his supporters.

In an atmosphere of all-pervasive optimism, the governor's address, in spite of his ludicrous claim of creditable performance during the poll, had knowledgeable observers and bureaucrats often nodding in agreement in the galleries. For the first time a Congress government in Assam clearly stated that the foreign nationals issue needed to be sorted out urgently instead of using euphemisms like the "so-called foreigners issue". The governor also talked of protecting the Assamese language and culture and, more important, of an administrative reorganisation of the state. The districts and subdivisions in Assam are monstrously large and unmanageable and contribute to the administration being so loose.

But the question everyone was asking if the Government had the mandate to talk in terms of such a major policy change. The entire exercise, like every other act of the five-week-old Government, was part of a desperate attempt to seek credibility among a populace that did not vote it to power. This was hardly the ideal strategy if the objective indeed was to try and darn the torn socio-cultural fabric of the polyglot state.

ORISSA

Slippery Deals

JANAKI Ballabh Patnaik's Government has weathered many a storm; but they were only mild breezes compared to the one that is battering Bhubaneswar now. For weeks, dissidents and opposition leaders have been unsuccessfully attempting to pin down the beleaguered chief minister under charges of corruption—charges that have apparently been detailed in a report prepared by the Public Undertakings Committee (PUC).

Last week, the lid finally blew off when the scandals featured in a stormy session of the state Assembly, with the Opposition and Congress(I) dissidents demanding that the report be presented to the Assembly and the Deputy Speaker, H.S. Padhy, stubbornly refusing to oblige. The refusal, however, only served to substantiate the charges that the scandal, involving mustard oil, rice and rape-seed oil, directly involved the state Government and that crores of rupees had been siphoned off by the state Civil Supplies Corporation.

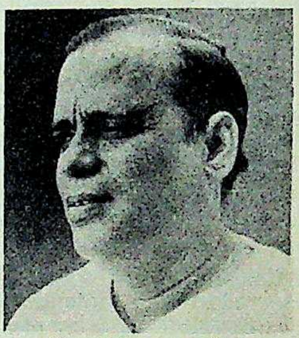
Exposure: In fact, the tortuous trail of the scandal and the Government's consistent attempts to stall the issue clearly indicates that the Patnaik Government is skating on thin ice. The first smell of the scandal emanated when a fishy mustard oil deal was exposed last September in the Oriya daily *Pragativadi* by a young Janata Party legislator, Srikant Jena. Jena and his party colleagues moved an infructuous adjournment motion in the state Assembly, but the state Government managed to evade the issue.

Jena, convinced that he was on the right track, waited till he was appointed to the house's PUC and then persuaded its Congress(I) Chairman, Hemanand Biswal, that the matter was serious enough to be investigated.

Meanwhile, Patnaik was frantically trying to avert the coming storm by appointing a panel of five legislators, hand-picked by Congress(I) state party chief Chintamani Jena, to inquire into the charges of corruption against him and his ministers. But while the Government was doing its best to keep a tight lid on the scandals, the accountant-general's detailed report was submitted to the PUC which, according to those involved in the investigations, clearly indicts senior Congress(I) leaders.

Rules Broken: The accountant-general's 'test-checks' are said to have turned up links between political bigwigs in the state and Congress(I) activist in Delhi Rohit Poddar who runs a business concern. The report points out that in January 1981 the board of directors of the state Civil Supplies Corporation decided to procure mustard oil from wherever possible to prevent speculation and keep the public distribution system going. In response to a tender the corporation got three quotations in April 1981 of which the Poddar offer to supply mustard oil at Rs 15.25 per kg was found "most favourable". An agreement was signed in May 1981 for 4,000 tonnes of mustard oil at the cost of Rs 6.10 crore.

The accountant-general's report says that contraryto practice "no tenders by wide publicity in press were called for though the value of the purchases was of the order of Rs 6.1 crore. The offers of two local firms and of the National Consumers' Cooperative Federation (NCCF) received between May and June 1981 to supply mustard oil at the rates ranging from Rs 15 to Rs 15.25 per kg were not considered". By July 1982 Poddar Enterprises had supplied 2,300 tonnes valued at Rs 3.5 crore. The accountant-general notes that as compared to the NCCF rates, the corporation had spent Rs 23.46 lakh more than it need have.



Patnaik: under fire

The corporation also broke other rules while awarding the contract to Poddar. For a start it did not seek approval from its own board of directors. Not only that, it did not get consent from the Government for the deal, even though all contracts worth more than Rs 50 lakh have to be approved by the Government. And when the matter came up before the corporation board in August 1981 the management was directed to review the agreement and consider other offers. This was never done. Four months later the board again directed the management to stop buying mustard oil but this was ignored.

Heavy Losses: Srikant Jena alleges that Poddar's firm withdrew Rs 50 lakh on a State Bank of India letter of credit for which no oil was ever supplied. The accountant-general also makes the point that the corporation got 1,716 kg of oil less than it had paid for—this, it says, was either because of leakage or because it was supplied empty containers. Whatever the reasons for the loss it was never reported to the suppliers. The corporation ended up charging higher prices —Rs 17.50—to make up its losse of which there were no takers mustard oil.

In January 1982 the board d slash prices and sell its oil at cost pri after this, however, the oil did because it was of such poor qualit

Transportation Scandal: The that has hit the headlines is the rape transportation scandal which invol rly Rs 11 crore. Again no tenders we for though the Civil Supplies Corp claims that this is quite normal. leader Biju Patnaik says that the sta Supplies Corporation has given s favourable terms to two transport op

When the matter was investig the accountant-general he found th corporation assigned the work to two porters: Messrs V.V. Narasimham and srs Nandighosh. Narasimham later re ed that their work sh handed over to Nand and the Government agreed to this witho ing for new tenders.

The audit report ted that in arriving negotiated rates it w sumed that the avera tance from the delivery to various storage was 400 km. In actu different distribution are between 191 km a km and this calculatio the corporation an Rs 2.5 lakh. The accountant-genera "Though the corporation was aware the rate was finalised taking an distance of 400 km."

Charges Denied: More than 80 p of the rape-seed oil and palm oil is have found its way onto the black ma somebody has made more than Rs 2 from the deal. It is also alleged that Nandighosh were related to the minister's wife. They are also said been shown undue favour in other w given licences to make soft drinks. P flatly denies such charges "Fantastic! It is nonsense! None transporters is related to my wife. How I know about things done by a corp The matter is now before the committee."

Patnaik has survived such charg past. But this time there is a co onslaught against him from among Assembly men as well as in Del Ramachandra Rath, R.N. Singh several other MP's from Orissa ha out against him. The battle for Bhu has been joined.

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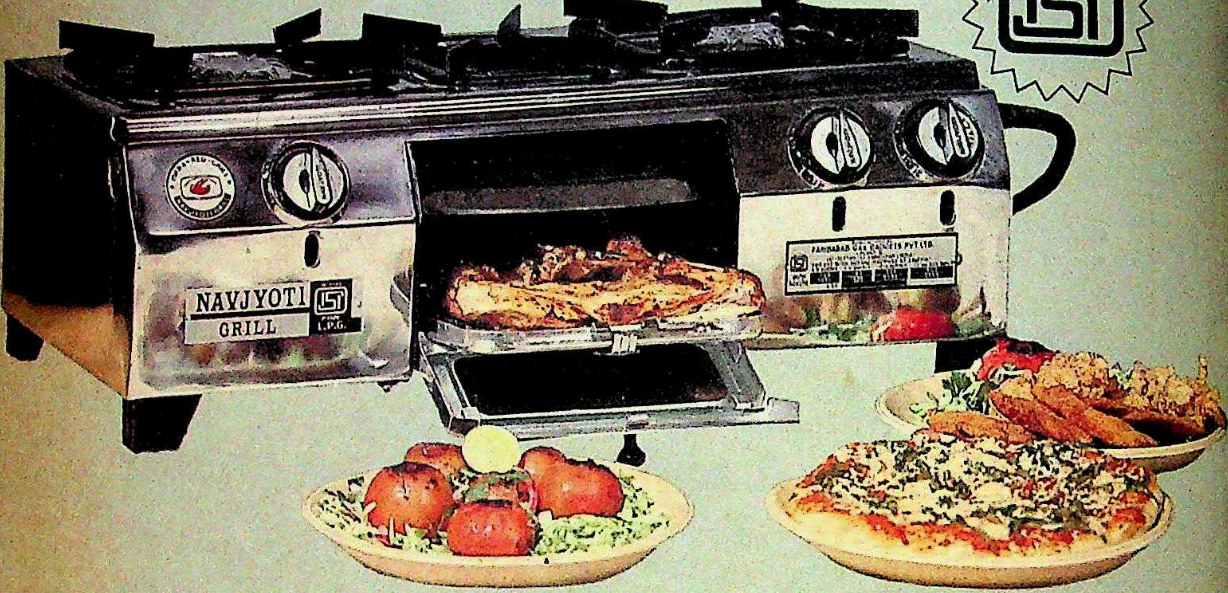

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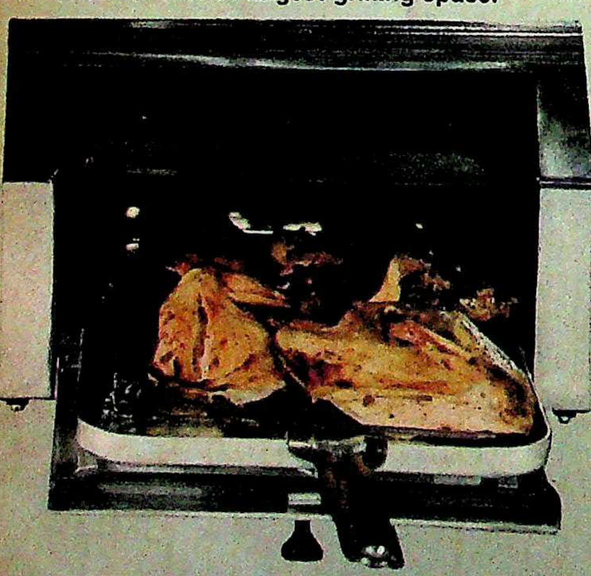

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POLITICIANS thrive on promises, but promises can boomerang. Orissa Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik has learnt this the hard way: last month, he said that the proposed Rs 550 crore Mani- dam project on the Mahanadi river, after the devastating floods in September 1982, had now been re- the Centre and the Water Commission passing the buck, Pat- obviously been unner- the Opposition-control- agitation—supported of the ruling Cong- which saw the project the interests of coas- over those of western

Patnaik: facing a storm

Manibhadra dam is everal projects designed the often destructive which flows for km through the state, entering it adhya Pradesh and spreading itself fertile 3,200 sq km delta before fal- the Bay of Bengal. Part of a plan as long ago as 1945, the Mani- dam's predecessor on the Mahanadi, upstream, is the Hirakud dam built Like most government projects, the shelved until last year's floods pro- Patnaik into announcing that the in the master plans of both the the state, would indeed be built.

ial Rift: Engineers admit, however, dam will benefit mostly the districts and Puri, and there lies the rub. Orissa's four districts, Sambal- ergarh and Kalahandi would not at all, and the fourth, Bolangir, be partially affected. Patnaik's had thus only exacerbated the ding tensions between the east and between the so-called 'Cuttackis' alpuris'.

with this, Patnaik backed down, sudden reversal of the decision plea- dy. As 30-odd Congress(I) legisla- plained in a memorandum to Mrs "The Manibhadra project was an- and given undue publicity and later ncement was made abandoning it agitation. This unwise step ... has demoralising effect on the party the process, the confidence of the western Orissa and coastal Orissa ." A dissident MLA used harsher words: "This is the latest example of Patnaik ruling the state according to his whims and creating the false impression that Orissa is on the road to progress."

Chief Minister Patnaik asserts that the Manibhadra dam was not announced in a hurry and has not been scotched. Says he: "What I have said is that a final decision will be taken by the Centre and the CWC." He points out that in 1977 the CWC had suggested a second dam on the Mahanadi and Manibhadra was the result. He adds: "This is a technical decision, not mine."

Retarded Development: Despite the political twist to the agitation, there is no doubt that it is, as Communist Party of India MLA Arun Dey says, "more socio-economic than political". Successive Central governments have done little to heal the Sambalpuri-Cuttacki rift: Kalahandi district is lowest on the development ladder, Bolangir is fairly neglected; Sundergarh and Sambalpur are considered industrially advanced but, as a disgruntled Sambalpuri says, "everything is controlled by the people from the coastal region".

Agitation leaders cite what they see as a prime example of the Government's bias: out of Rs 193 crore allotted for relief and reconstruction after last year's floods, Cuttack district received Rs 150 crore and Puri district Rs 30 crore; Bolangir got Rs 16 lakh and the other districts received the rest. Other grouses include the fact that Sambalpur University, which covers five districts —including the four western districts—has 30 colleges, while Balasore district alone has 57 colleges. Parts of western Orissa are still not connected with the state capital and other parts by railway.

As the anti-dam agitation grew, the Government added fuel to the fire by announcing a Rs 11 crore scheme to strengthen the ring bandh around Cuttack, which the floods threatened to wash away last year. Sambalpuris argue that with the dam, there would be no need for the bandh, and say that there should be smaller ring dams on the Mahanadi's tributaries, which would eliminate the need for the Manibhadra dam itself. Officials say that there are about 40 projects slated for the tributaries —three completed, six under construction, and the rest still to get underway—which would irrigate a total of 18.5 lakh acres. But after their completion an 18,000 sq km large catchment area will still be left and the Manibhadra project will become absolutely necessary.

Advantages: Engineers also point out that hardly 2 per cent of the 1.13 lakh acres that would be affected by Manibhadra is irrigated land: 60 per cent would be forest area. They say that the shelved Tikrapara project —part of the original plan nearly 40 years ago—would have affected 6.5 lakh acres of which 4 lakh acres were cultivable land and another 2 lakh acres irrigated land. If the Manibhadra dam was built, there would be no need for Tikrapara.

But the agitation leaders are in no mood for logical arguments. Suresh Pujari, the leader of the explosive anti-traders movement in 1980 (INDIA TODAY, November 16-30, 1980) points out that some of the families displaced during the construction of the Hirakud dam 26 years ago have still not been rehabilitated. In fact, residents of villages cut off from Orissa by the dam are finding their way into Madhya Pradesh. Pujari warned of dangerous consequences if the Government went ahead with the dam. Patnaik now finds himself in the none too unfamiliar position between the devil and the deep sea.

—FARZAND AHMED

WEST BENGAL

Filling A Vacuum

EVER since the Marxists retained power in West Bengal last year, they had felt the absence of former ministers like Ashok Mitra and Buddhadev Bhattacharya, both of whom had lost at the 1982 hustings. Last fortnight, the state leadership of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) chose pragmatism over principle when it nominated Ashok Mitra as the candidate for the June by-election in the Jadavpore assembly constituency which fell vacant after the death of Shankar Gupta who had won from here last year and was made minister in-charge of power. Although a few eyebrows were raised over choosing a person who had been rejected by voters barely a year ago, the Marxist leadership felt this had to be done as there was no other way in which the ailing Chief Minister Jyoti Basu could be helped to run the Government more effectively.

Basu himself was more forthright in his defence of Mitra's candidature. Said he: "It is not as if we are trying to get him into the Cabinet through the back-door. He will face

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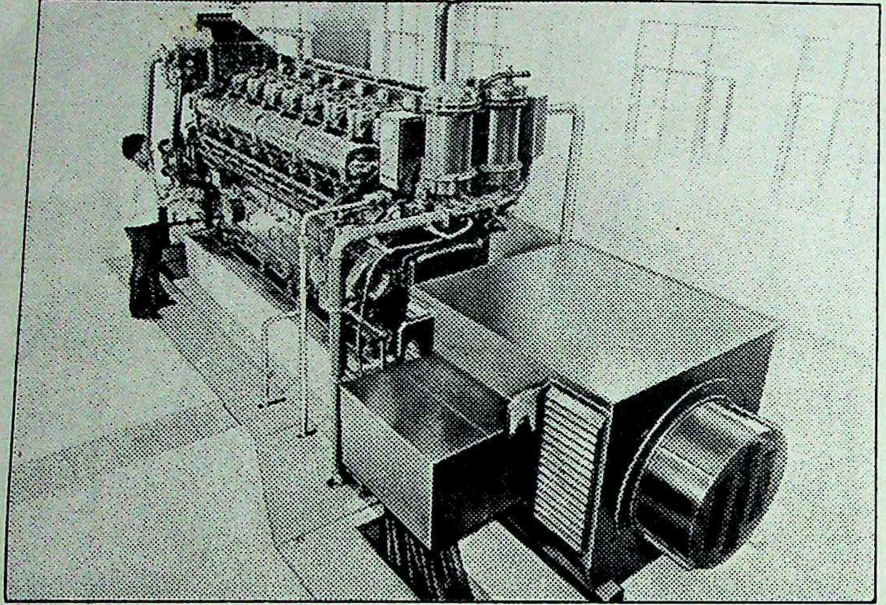

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orate and if he wins, he will be s very much through the front Located in Calcutta's southern su- davpore's electorate comprises ess- refugees from the former East Pakis- have always been a solid vote bank Marxists and there is no way in which lose from there. He is bound to take charge of the finance portfolio being handled by Basu himself.

right Style: For Mitra, the return s will mean bidding goodbye to which had been keeping him busy h a teaching assignment at the Statistical Institute. Mitra had been a columnist for Calcutta's latest daily *graph*, hitting out relentlessly at the ent in Delhi in much the same as he used to issue press statements s earlier tenure as finance minister, the economic policies of the Central

Mitra: unquestioned ability

ment. As a senior member of the *The* 's editorial staff said: "We will lose columnist."

ra himself regrets that his return to politics will take him away from wri- he admitted last fortnight: "I will However, one cannot avoid the call ." Mitra made it clear that once in the he would take up the anti-Centre again. Said he: "It will be my fore- y to expose Indira Gandhi and her ." This might endanger the working ip Basu has built up with such key figures as Pranab Mukherjee, and as speculation last fortnight as to Mitra would be curbed by a party as already shown its willingness to be ight side of Mrs Gandhi on vital issues such as Assam. But as Basu We need him to strengthen the Cabi- ra's hard-hitting style of functio- ng no opportunity to needle the and all others he considered enemies ople including senior officers and net colleagues belonging to other parties which often caused embarrassment to his own party, was a far cry from Basu's more experienced and cautious handling of situations. While it made good copy for the press, it also made people wonder whether a state which is primarily dependent on the Centre for its finances can afford all that lightening and thunder.

Calculated Risk: In fact, Basu seemed to get along much better with Central ministers like Pranab Mukherjee than with Mitra, who would often queer the pitch with his harsh words even though these were fully justified from the West Bengal point of view. There is no indication that Mitra will change his style, but it is clear that Jyoti Basu decided to risk that and gain from the other assets of Mitra, namely a clear grasp of finance and an administrative ability which his stints with the World Bank and Central Government, to which he was economic adviser for some time, helped develop.

The first indications that the party wanted Mitra back into parliamentary politics reportedly left him cold and he was stated to have told friends that if he had to contest another election, it should be from the same Calcutta constituency which had returned him in 1977 only to reject him five years later. (The damage Mitra had caused the Sanchaita Chit Fund, which provided a large number of Bengali families with easy money, was believed to be one of the reasons for his defeat.) Apparently he had felt it would amount to a loss of face to get elected from a safe seat after having lost his home base, but if others in the party also share his view, the leadership got the better of them and there was no way in which even the strong-willed teacher could get round a mandate from the top.

Personnel Problem: However, the fact that the party decided to see Mitra back again brought into sharp focus a problem relating to personnel that has been plaguing it for quite some time. The Marxists have come to the realisation that they just do not have enough men trained to function as ministers. It has become common practice for Basu's Cabinet colleagues to rush up to him with even minor problems, even though they have been asked not to do so by the state unit Secretary Saroj Mukherjee.

As a member of the chief minister's secretariat at Writers Building said: "These days it is almost impossible for the chief minister to be alone for even a minute as one or another minister is always coming to him with files." Basu himself had also been feeling the strain and when the Jadavpore vacancy came, he pounced on the opportunity to get back Mitra who can take over the burden of finance, leaving him with time to oversee and even spoon-feed his less experienced colleagues. —SUMANTA SEN

J & K

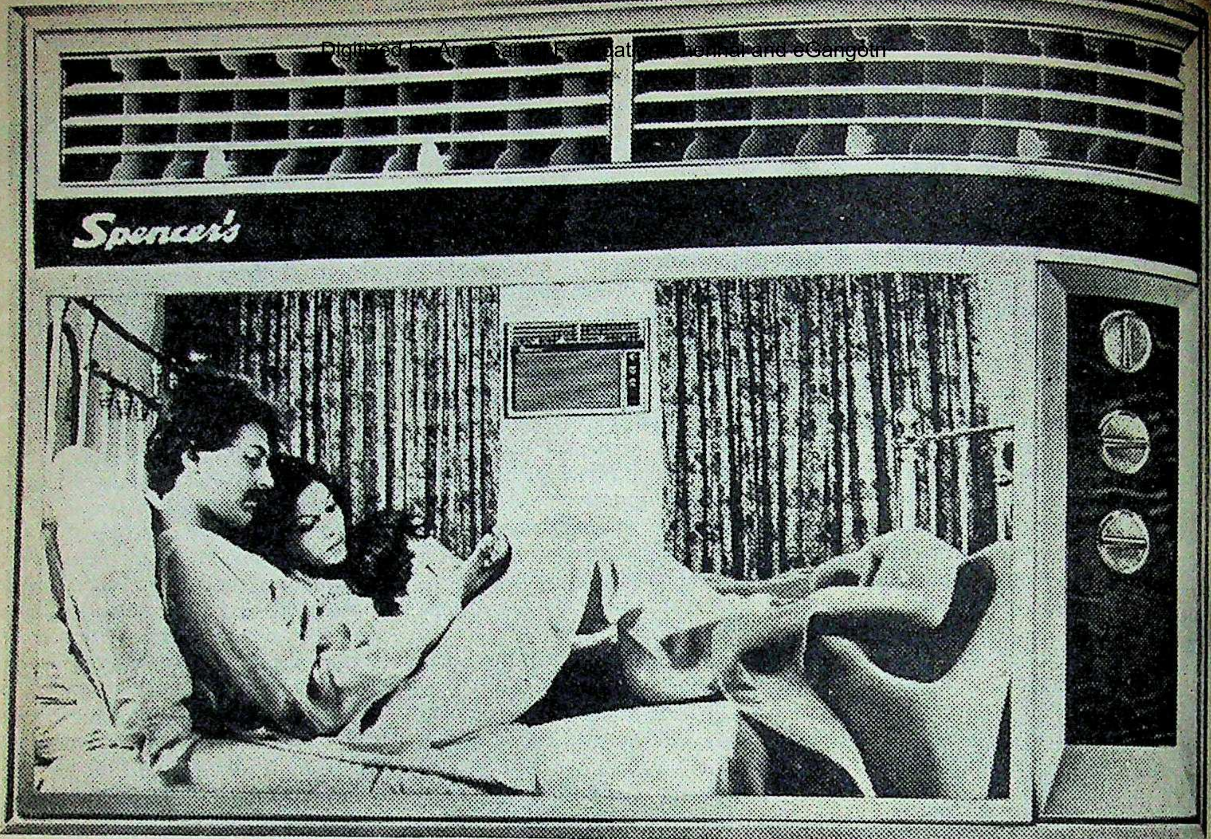
Subjects Of Dispute

IF SIGNS from the Kashmir valley are any indication, Assam is not the only state with citizenship problems. Last fortnight, Jammu & Kashmir Law Minister P.L. Handoo cancelled permanent citizenship certificates which had been "wrongly" issued in favour of three Jammu residents. With elections to the state Legislative Assembly round the corner, the move followed the controversial official pronouncement that "the state Government might cancel state subject certificates to a large number of non-resident persons settled permanently, mostly in the Jammu region."

The Government's decision was prompted by sharp dissension in the three-member Delimitation Commission (DC) headed by J.N. Wazir, former chief justice of J&K High Court. Set up last year to revise electoral constituencies where necessary, the DC's proposals had highlighted the population increase in Jammu. It had recommended two additional Assembly seats for the region on the basis of the 1981 census. However, in a dissenting note, a Kashmiri member of the DC, Mian Jalaluddin, attributed the increase to "the inclusion of non-state subjects, all Hindus, in the electoral rolls". Subsequently, in a consensus move, the DC resolved to maintain existing electoral rolls that concede 42 seats to Kashmir, 32 to Jammu and two to Ladakh in a 76-member Assembly.

Handoo: taking a firm stand

The state subject law in J & K dates back to the six-decade-old attempt of Sir Maharaja Hari Singh, its Dogra Hindu ruler, to ward off a "business and jobs aggression" from the neighbouring state of Punjab. An act passed then, stated that "only hereditary state subjects could purchase land and property and be appointed against regular government services in the state". Amidst fears of Hindu domination, this measure was renewed in the 1952 Delhi Agreement between Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru, and finally incarnated in the state's constitution. This constitution bestowed a special status upon



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ich was also defined in Article 370 dian Constitution.

despread Reaction: The reactions to essure have been immediate, both in and Kashmir. Said a Jamaati Islami Jammu: "It is mainly after the ex- of the rail-head to Jammu about 10 ago that people from the northern the country have settled here un- ." Added a senior officer of the state epartment: "How can we agree to this influx of about seven lakh outsiders aim to be permanent residents as well in the state? Do they want to turn a minority?" In Srinagar, Islamic entalist A.G. Lone, MLA, reiterated: the instrument of accession, even the President of India is not entitled to purchase land in J & K state."

The ripples have fast spread to the media, with the Kashmiri press hailing the "combing operation" unanimously. Advising Jammu residents to bear the issue with equanimity, the *Srinagar Times* editorialised: "The people of Jammu should fear most, more than the Kashmiris, the threat of being aggressed upon by bordering Punjab's business domination."

Various parties in Jammu have, however, vehemently opposed the proposed action. Leading the fray, Thakur Baldev Singh, president of the state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said: "It is simply aimed at creating conditions of uncertainty and will lead to communal polarisation in the state. The BJP will fight against this dangerous move tooth and nail." Hitting back, he added: "The Government should take steps to push back those illegal entrants to the state from Pakistan who have settled here."

With popular apprehension of a 'witch hunt', an unruffled Handoo continued to insist that "we'll not allow any violation of our state's constitution that is an embodiment of the sentiments of six million people of the state, irrespective of their region or religion". Nevertheless, it is clear that if the new decision is executed in the full spirit of its meaning, it will deprive several residents of the state of their rights.

—GHULAM NABI KHAYAL

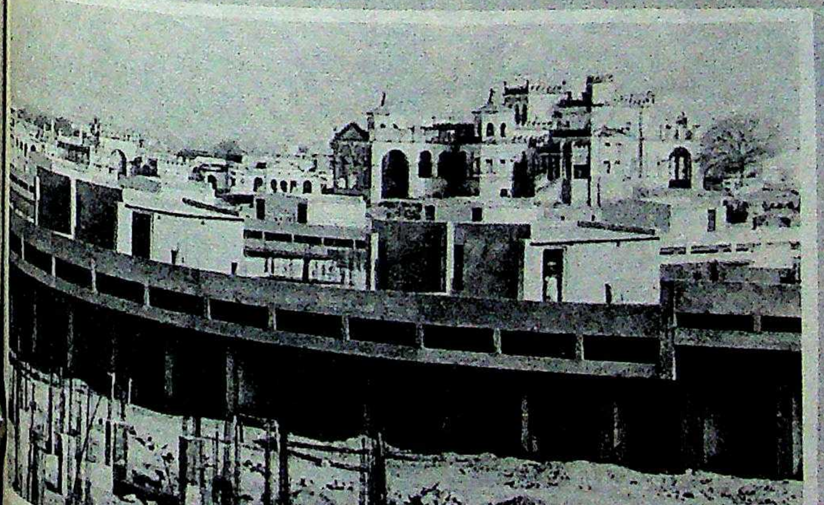
DERABAD

Wholesale Win

WHEN the state Government decided to set up a new wholesale vegetable market in the resi- tial suburb of Malakpet it did not ant- ate serious opposition to its moves. it had reckoned without the Malak- Citizens Forum (MCF) which has the move at every stage. The MCF its battle to court and after a prolon- 15-month tussle has managed to the Government's plans—the first a public interest case has been deci- favourably in the state.

MCF's victory has brought down a of criticism on the M. Channa Reddy ernment which initiated the plan for new market in 1980. The two-judge h of P. Channakeshava Reddy and Kodandaramaiah scathingly remarked: "The executive action bristles with arbitrariness and could possibly be defended if done by the ruler of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad H.E.H. the Nizam, but it is indefensible in a republican government in which the law governs."

Ironically, the land that the Government planned to acquire belonged originally to the Nizam. In January 1980, the Andhra Pradesh Housing Board (APHB) started proceedings to acquire the land in question—Mahbub Mansion—for Rs 43.32 lakh. The ostensible reason given for the acquisition was that the land was to be used for public housing. But even before the money was paid and the APHB had acquired the land Channa Reddy set in motion moves to lease out the land at throwaway prices. He asked the director of marketing to prepare plans for the wholesale market. The selling price was fixed at Rs 40 lakh even though it was worth more than Rs 10 crore on the open market.



The proposed site: hurried transactions

Deal Opposed: Channa Reddy's ambitious schemes ran into trouble almost immediately. The moment the residents got wind of the moves they banded together to oppose it. Within a short time they were able to dig out a number of unusual aspects that characterised the deal. Says MCF's lawyer: "The Government committed a fraud by the manner in which rules were amended and the rush of transactions that took place just prior to the changes in the rules." He adds: "The ostensible lease in favour of the Hyderabad Agricultural Market Committee (HAMC) was not for profit but yet it was a guise or disguise to benefit the individual rich wholesale grain merchants."

The judges also have plenty to say about the dealings between the chief minister and the wholesale grain merchants. Their judgement says: "It is a clear case where the law did not govern but the citizens governed."

The high court ordered that HAMC's money should be returned. It also ordered that the APHB should take possession of the land and draw up a housing plan. The court's order has upset the wholesale merchants who had already made plans for moving into Malakpet. Says the President of the Hyderabad Wholesale Foodgrain Dealers and Traders Market Development Society, B. Dayanand: "We have spent Rs 1.6 crore on construction and have asked the Government to move the Supreme Court. The purpose of shifting is to reduce congestion."

There are no indications yet that the N.T. Rama Rao Government plans to stand by the actions of the Channa Reddy government. And if the high court has the last word then it will be a blow on behalf of public-interest group.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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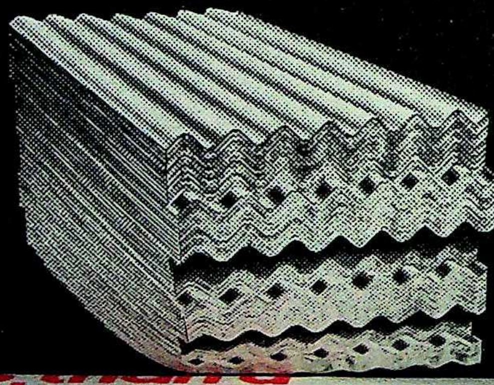

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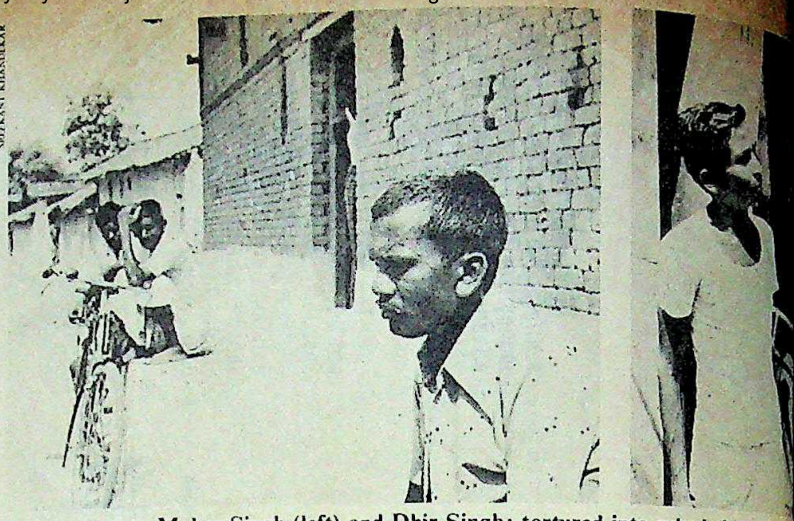
MADHYA PRADESH

Reign Of Terror


SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Mohar Singh (left) and Dhir Singh: tortured into submission

THE PATTERN repeats itself with sickening regularity: a crime is committed in an isolated village, the police arrive, beat up all and sundry and in the process extort money from the defenceless villagers. Last month, yet another instance of calculated police brutality came to light in Madhya Pradesh, when, a sub-inspector and a head constable were suspended in connection with the police reign of terror in Bamhanikona village (estimated population: 800) in Bilaspur district, about 90 km from Bilaspur town, in the first week of February. According to eyewitness reports the police had gone there to investigate the murder of Ramlal, a resident of the neighbouring village of Dhatura, and had allegedly ended up putting Bamhanikona's unfortunates, a majority of them Gond tribals, through a series of tortures as a prelude to extortion.

It is a measure of the terror they inspired that the matter did not become public until a month later. Says Bamhanikona's Deputy Sarpanch Mohar Singh: "We had been warned that if we complained, we would only face greater trouble. So we simply kept quiet." Adds K.K. Pandey, social worker and a former Jan Sangh man who exposed the atrocity: "When I first went to the village, two weeks after the incident, the victims were still terrified. It was only after great persuasion that they opened up." Pandey returned from the village and promptly published his shocking findings in the Bilaspur paper *Lokswar*.

Sustained Torture: The police first visited Bamhanikona on January 31. At three in the afternoon, they called its residents to the school in Dhatura and threatened them with trouble if they did not reveal the identity of Ramlal's murderers. They let off all except four villagers, share-croppers with the dead man. One of the four, Dhir Singh, a slightly-built man in his mid-forties, recounts: "I was the third to be called inside the schoolroom. I could hear the screams of the two who had gone in before me. I was made to lie down on my back and they beat me on the soles of my feet. If I winced or jerked my leg. I was hit on my shin and knees. When I screamed, one of them put his boot on my face saying, 'You talk too much.' That was not the end of my humiliation. They made me and another villager, Surit Ram strip, hold one another's penises and interrogate each other. Meanwhile, the police laughed."

On February 1, about 50 villagers were asked to come to the school and made to sit outside from early morning until late in the night, when they finally got some food. They were all detained needlessly through the night and some of them were called in turn by turn to be either slapped, beaten with a staff or, in some cases, whipped with a short leather whip. The treatment continued on February 2. That night, 10 people—six men and four women—were arrested. Nine belonged to the family of Shiva Lal, one of the four share-croppers who had been originally detained.

Pandey: exposing an atrocity

The same day, Kapil Singh Rathor, sarpanch of nearby Korbi, arrived, supposedly to lend a sympathetic ear but in fact to strike a deal on behalf of the police. But the tortures continued. Mohar Singh was subjected to electric shocks from a generator. Says he: "They told me that I was part of a meeting that had conspired to complain against police maltreatment. They put the electric leads around my ear and worked the generator. At the end of half an hour I was in a condition in which I was willing to admit to anything. I couldn't think."

Extortionate Demand: The villagers had sent for help to the local Congress(I) MLA Bodhram Kanwar, but they allege that he did not bother to come but sent his nephew instead. Meanwhile Rathor said that the police would let off the rest of the villagers for Rs 40,000. It was an enormous sum to
demand of Bamhanikona which su
single crop agriculture on fragmen
Moreover, this year the district h
severely hit by drought.

Nevertheless, every man dipped
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while, Rathor is absconding.

If Puri's promise of justice is
with scepticism. it is because, m
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—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in B

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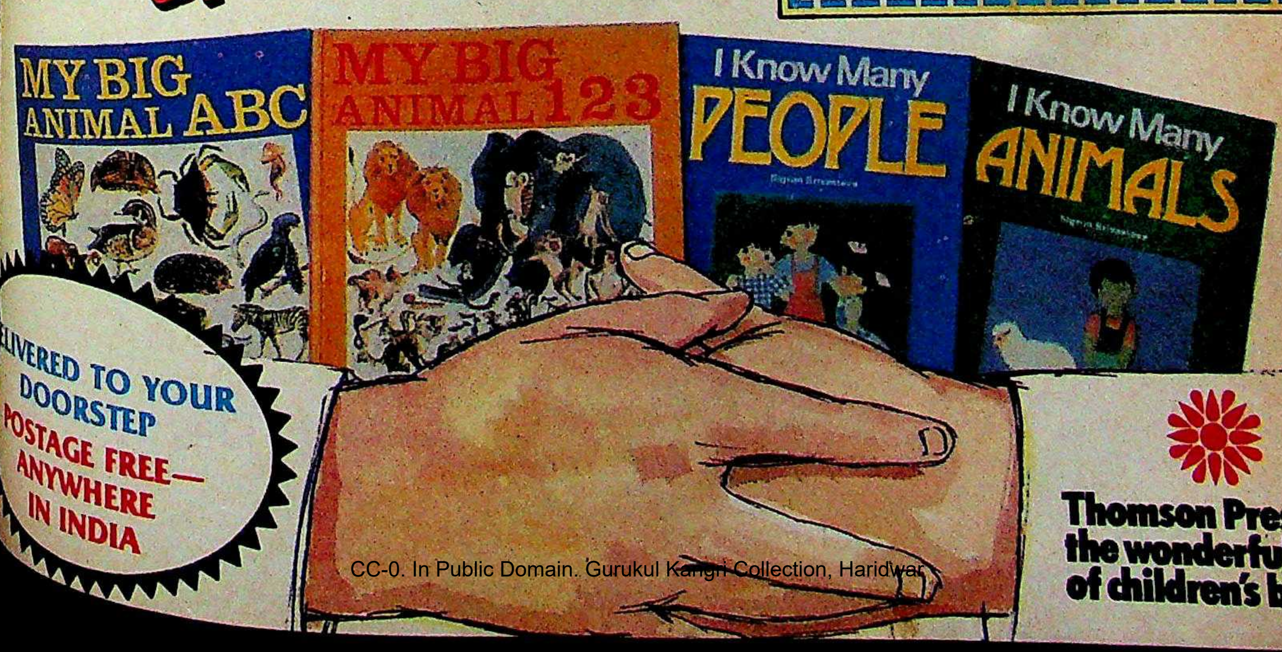

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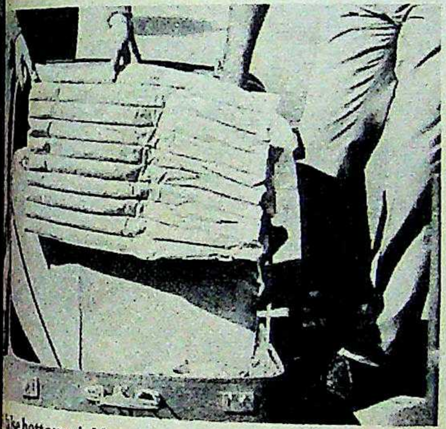
he Pakistan Trail

NE field at least cooperation bet- India and Pakistan is making slow ay. For the first time ever Indian rcement officers have been sending ative feelers to their Pakistani parts in an effort to staunch the flow n streaming across the border. ese moves have not come a moment . In recent months there have been sing number of heroin seizures. st month the Pakistanis nabbed a arrying 421 kg of heroin. Pakistan's r of Customs Jehangir Khan claims haul is the biggest ever in the world.

Catch: The Pakistani haul came the heels of another at the other the smuggling network. Only days Moudi Fares, a Moroccan diplomat ght at Charles De Gaulle Airport in th 15 kg of heroin neatly tucked away iefcase. Fares, who was posted in d boarded the Air France flight only urs earlier at New Delhi. With his ic immunity Fares would have slipped ugh customs without the least Says a narcotics official: "This is first time that drug smugglers have lomats as carriers. The trend is nt."


lse bottom yields a rich haul: steady traffic

ese are not the only indications that partment of Revenue Intelligence ich has the job of curbing drug g are going to have their hands full o curb the flow of Pakistani heroin e Intelligence reports from across der report a bumper harvest of opium According to Pakistan's Narcotics timates, even in an average year 0 metric tonnes of heroin are produced the Golden Crescent area. This is nough to keep the entire western supplied. In fact experts estimate that 50 metric tonnes is enough to keep the US market going for a year. South West Asian (SWA) heroin is said to have grabbed nearly 70 per cent of the US market and also has a virtual monopoly in Europe.

India's lax drug laws act like a magnet for drug traffickers. And since drug enforcement agents in Europe keep a strict watch on flights from Pakistan more and more heroin is finding its way to India. On rough estimates nearly 50 per cent of the heroin produced in Pakistan is brought into India. At the moment the country is being used as a transit point for smuggling both from Pakistan's Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle in South East Asia. Unfortunately Indian narcotics agents say they will not be able to achieve a great deal unless they have active cooperation especially from the Pakistanis.

Preventive Slips: But if the traffic in drugs is to be stopped, the Pakistanis, it seems, will have to bear the brunt of the task. Already within the last five years the Pakistanis have been able to pressure farmers to stop growing heroin. But the tribal structure in the poppy growing areas complicates matters. At one point some years ago, tribal chieftains levied fines on farmers who destroyed poppy crops. Doug Wankel, an US drug enforcement official, reckons that the problem can never be tackled by reducing poppy cultivation.

Indian experts feel that the most vulnerable points in the chain are the laboratories which produce the opium. A laboratory can produce nearly 100 kg of heroin a month and if this is knocked out the entire network can be disrupted. On the other hand the arrest of individual carriers can never slow down smuggling so effectively.

So far India has been lucky in that it does not have a drug problem of its own. The only consumers of heroin in this country are the foreigners who visit India. This year's bumper crop is, however, could have repercussions. Only last fortnight David Roger, 30, a Canadian was found dead in a New Delhi hotel. He was clutching a syringe in his right hand. Traces of heroin were also found in his room. Police believe that his death was caused by an overdose of drugs. And as the poppy farmers reap their rich harvest Indian narcotics officials are waiting for the fallout.

—ASOKA RAINA

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The Bm

> *"Bangalore, in many ways, is unlike the other great cities of India. Most of the other cities in India remind one certainly of the present, certainly of the future but essentially of the past. But Bangalore, as I said, more than any other great city of India is a picture of the future...."*
>
> —Jawaharlal Nehru, July 17, 1962

TRUE-BLUE Bangaloreans, who had assembled in the stately Vidhana Soudha to listen to the late prime minister's speech, were amazed at the new sobriquet for the city coined by Nehru. They had grown weary of it being called a pensioner's paradise, air-conditioned town, mini-hill-station and garden city of India. But future city! Unbelievable! "It was a sleepy town at that time," snorts 61-year-old M. Fazlul Hasan, the city's Boswell.

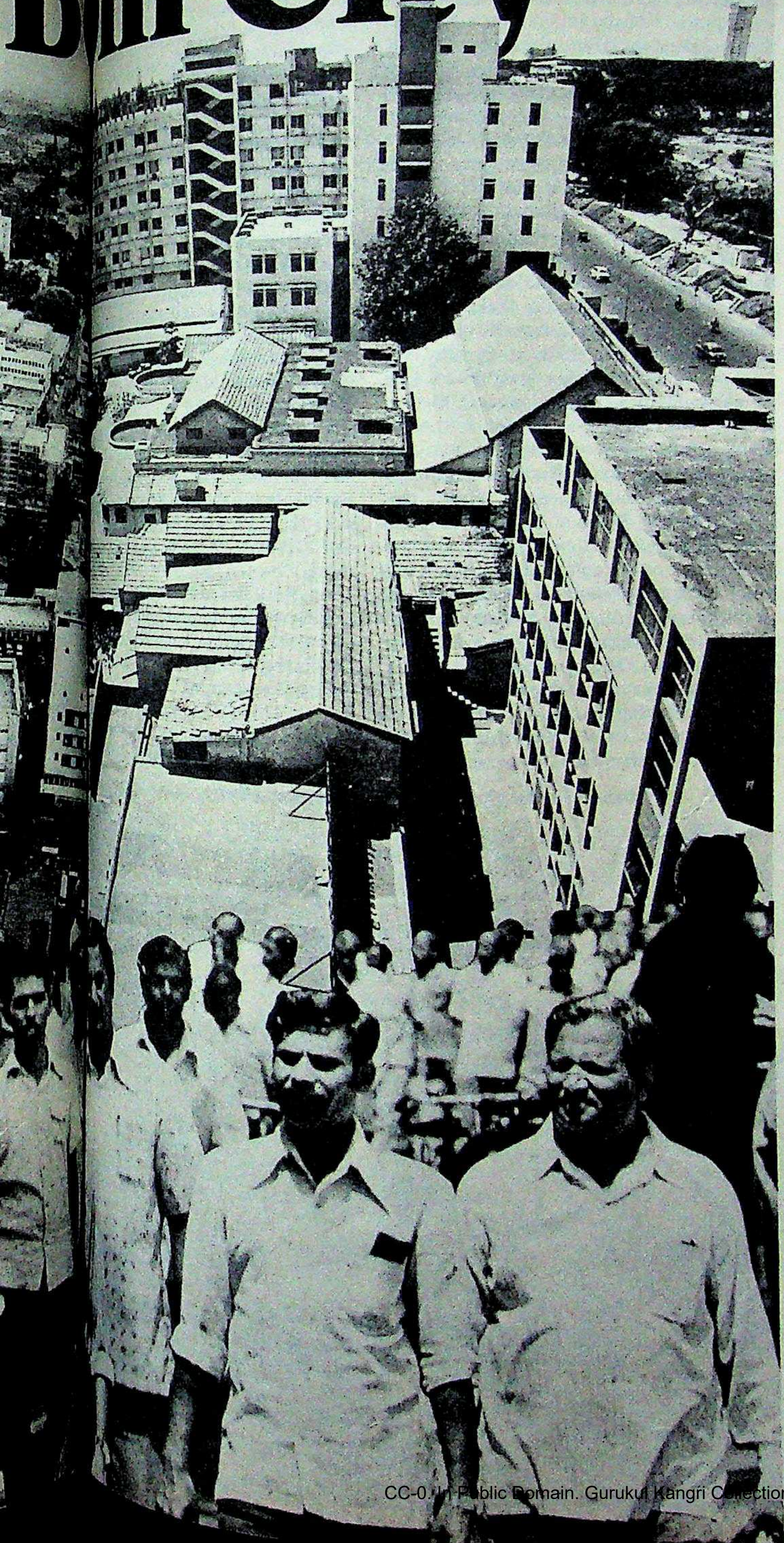
But 21 years later the city's languorous existence has been rudely transformed into a reality it had never dreamed of but which came uncomfortably close to Nehru's prophetic words. As Hasan bashfully admits: "The planners were pygmies in front of this new Goliath."

Vintage Bangalore is still there: the retired Brigadier Janki Das Kapur, his silvery white hair wind blown, as he strides briskly through the hazy morning, his walking stick tapping a marching beat on the tarmac in Indiranagar; the three Kothwala sisters cooped in their quaint Victorian house on Grant Road with its peaked gables, ridge tiles, skylights and colonnaded portico sheltering a 1949 model Standard Vanguard; pretty jacaranda trees lining the Main Guard Cross Road strewing it with a carpet of pale purple flowers in spring. But these are only glimpses of a euphoric past that is rapidly yielding to a totally different future.

Industrial Character: Instead of the chirping of birds, it is the clarion call of factory sirens that rouses Bangalore every morning. Kapur has been overtaken by an army of workers that can be seen marching on the roads to catch their morning bus. Among them is M.K. Pankajaksham, clutching his tiffin box and hurrying through the streets of Jalahalli to catch a bus that would take him to his factory on Old Madras Road, 20 km away.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BHAWAN SINGH

Bm City



Even before dawn can show its reddish face factory buses are snarling through the streets. Weaving his way skilfully through the jam in his car is small-scale industrialist Vishnu Mathur, his tie knotted to perfection and his hair brushed slickly back, as he races towards the Peenya Industrial Estate on the outskirts of the city. On either side of the road the quaint old buildings and pretty avenue trees have yielded to a jungle of hard concrete moulded into 'futuristic' shapes that tower over the city marring the once soothing Victorian skyline. By midday Mahatma Gandhi Road, once a lazy street, is teeming with people. "We have become victims of RPM (revolutions per minute)," mourns M.A. Parthasarathy, who as secretary of the Bangalore Urban Arts Commission (BUAC) has been fighting to save old Bangalore.

Radical Transformation: So gradual has been the transformation that the city's phenomenal growth has been largely ignored till very recently. In fact the mistaken belief that Bangalore could never be a city of the future clung to its planners for quite some years. But last year, after the Census Department completed its massive head count, to the astonishment of everyone including its planners, Bangalore was clocked to be the fastest growing metropolis in India. From a manageable 16.4 lakh people in 1971, the population has exploded to 29.13 lakh, a size the city planners had estimated it would touch only in 1991! Shaking his head in wonder, Census Director B.K. Das says: "It is undoubtedly the new boom town in the country."

The rest of the country is only now beginning to echo Das's sentiments. Consider the facts:

► With a fantastic growth rate of 76 per cent in the last decade, Bangalore has outstripped the 12 other cities in the country which have a population of more than 10 lakhs. Only Jaipur with 57 per cent and Delhi with 56 per cent come anywhere close to matching Bangalore's phenomenal growth rate. The percentage growth for the other nine cities in the last decade was—Pune: 48, Ahmedabad: 43, Hyderabad: 40, Nagpur: 39, Bombay: 37, Madras: 34, Kanpur: 32, Calcutta: 30, and Lucknow: 23. The all-India average for cities was 46 per cent. Bangalore is now estimated to be among the first 10 fastest growing cities in the world.

► Bangalore is hailed as the scientific

FEROZ KHAN*, 45, *is among the increasing number of film stars who have bought farms in Bangalore suburbs. The film mogul bought* 27 *acres of land about* 16 *km from the city and has built a ranch house complete with horses, cattle, coconut groves, snooker table and a swimming pool. For Khan who grew up in the city and was educated here the choice seems natural. Says he: "I decided to settle down in Bangalore because my roots are here. Bombay has become a slum city but in Bangalore you can get away from the daily strain of modern living and really relax."

But Bangalore has changed since Khan's boyhood when the streets were so lonely after dark that they feared ghosts. He remarks: "I see a lot of industries now and there is a new affluence." Khan too has set up a medium-scale foundry, because "I plan to retire here and I must have something to keep me busy besides film production."

capital of India and now has the highest concentration of scientific institutions and talent in the country. It has become a nerve-centre for space research and astronomy with the headquarters of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Indian Institute of Astrophysics located in the city. With 400 Ph.D. holders on its faculty the Indian Institute of Science (IISC) has become the hub of scientific research. Among the other institutions that have flocked to the city are the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, the National Tuberculosis Institute and the Raman Research Institute.

The city is a smaller version of California's Silicon Valley and accounts for a third of the total production of electronics in the country and manufactures 80 per cent of the professional electronic equipment. The two public sector giants, the Indian Telephone Industries (ITI) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) are situated in the city apart from the government-owned concern, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Nippon Electronics Limited, Hegde and Golay, British Physical Laboratories and around 250 small-scale industries manufacturing electronic components. While ITI holds a virtual monopoly in the production of telephone instruments and automatic exchanges, BEL is the single largest manufacturer of TV tubes and semiconductors accounting for half the country's production apart from producing complex sophisticated equipment for the Defence Ministry like radars and microwave equipment.

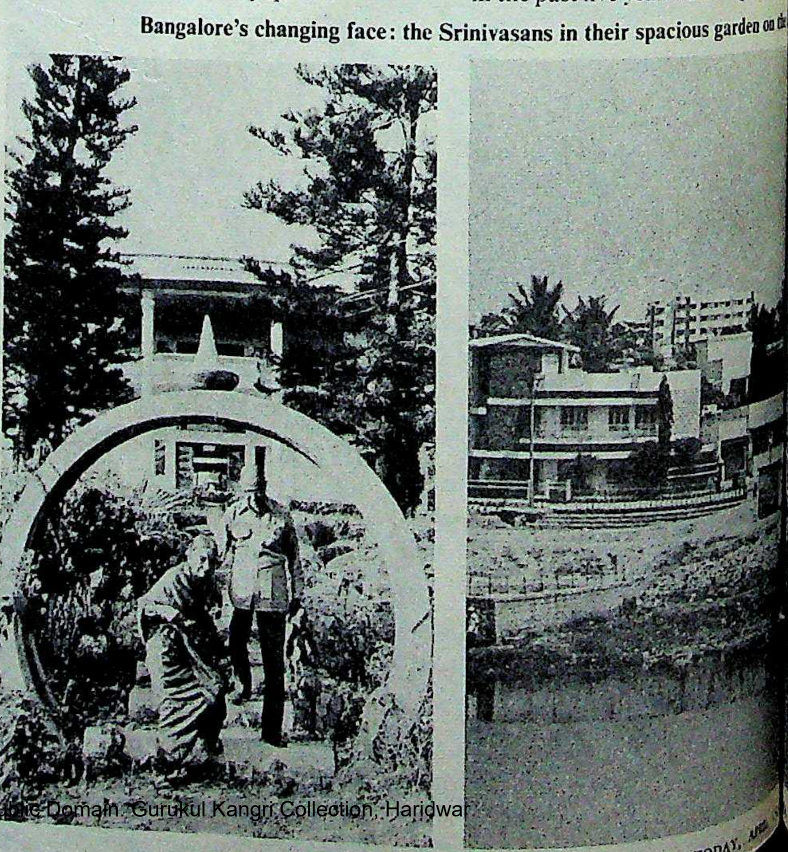
Bangalore is the Mecca for ae
and the Jaguar, the Indian Air For
sophisticated fighter, is now being a
in the Hindustan Aeronautics Limi
complex on the outskirts of the city
manufactured 2,400 aircraft and h
ned more than a dozen of them incl
Marut (HF-24), Ajeet, Pushpak, Ba
Kiran.*Apart from HAL all the key a
cal research and development orga
are located in the city.

With a battery of eight industri
girding the city, Bangalore has on
largest conglomeration of industrie
country. In the past decade more th
large- and medium-scale industr
come up apart from 9,000 small-sc
stries that have mushroomed in the
ban industrial estates like Peenya, Ve
dra, Dyavasandra, Old Madras Ro
Mysore Road. An estimated Rs 5
has been invested both in public an
sector industries since 1970.

It has emerged as India's Ep
racing, being the only city to hold rac
months in a year. A total of 400 ra
held every year and an estimated
horses participate with stake money
ging Rs 1.5 crore, making it the
racing centre in the country. Eight
farms have come up in and around
again the largest number for any ra
cuit in the country.

It is the new boom town for b
with 180 multi-storey complexes co
in the past five years resulting in a te

Bangalore's changing face: the Srinivasans in their spacious garden on the



land prices and house rents rising cent. An estimated 80 million sq ft worth more than Rs 1,200 crore has ught up in the past six years.

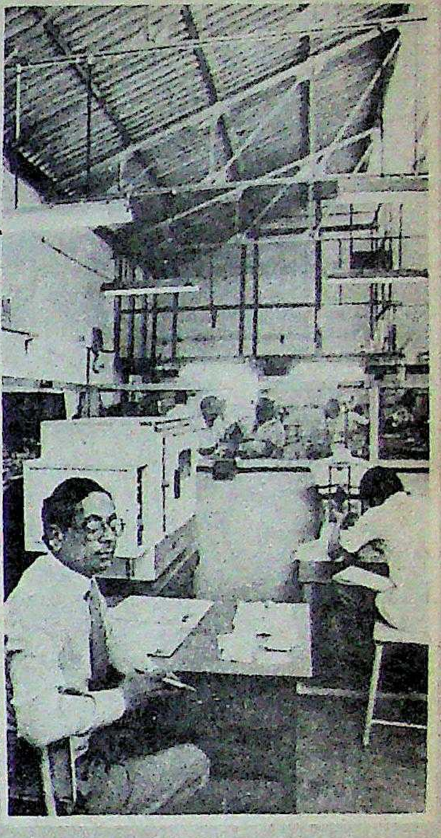
SURVEYING ssal development from his mansion, one of the few bungalows left in e with a large garden, 85-year-old Srinivasan, a patriarchal citizen of wears a gloomy countenance. From e on the banks of the beautiful Tank, one of the few remaining ets in what was once a city of lakes, ge in Bangalore is clearly apparent. an's house which once stood like a tinel over Sankey Tank is now suffocated y a belt of newly-built houses. In the skyscrapers dwarf trees and stick ugly rods against the backdrop of an ty. Staring reflectively at the bleak Srinivasan remarks: "The charm of re, like other charms, has been its g."

e fatal charm that Bangalore exudes urse, its climate that has lured most migrants. Sitting prettily on a plan altitude of 3,000 feet, Bangalore is ular blob on the right lobe of the kidped state of Karnataka. The altitude t with not only a uniformly cool clie year round, but also abundant greenery that has earned for it several endearing nicknames. Unlike any other major city in India, Bangalore is neither situated near the coast nor does it have a river to quench the thirst of its residents or turn the wheels of industry. Instead, it has to depend mainly on the Cauvery river flowing in a valley 80 km away and has to pump its water up a steep gradient.

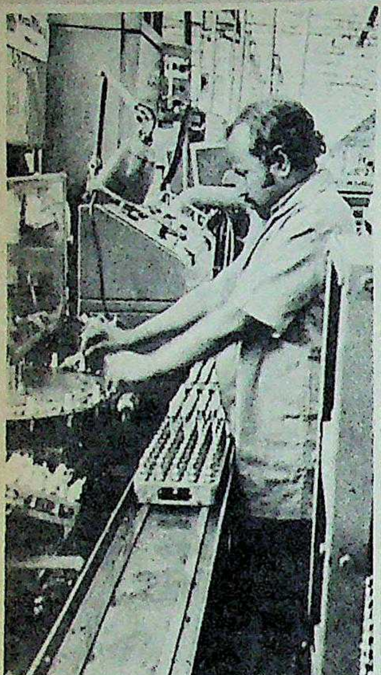
Yet it has grown from the small village that it was when a petty chieftain called Kempe Gowda established it in 1537 A.D. Cutting down dense jungle, Gowda ordered four bullock-carts to plough their way in different directions from a central point and built a fortress around the area where they stopped. His son Gowda II built four conical towers, which stand to this day beyond the fort gates, and predicted that the city would grow to these limits.

But Gowda could never have imagined the extent that Bangalore would grow to. Like the primordial atom in the big bang theory of the universe, Bangalore exploded, sending splinters in all directions that spread with amazing rapidity, especially after India's Independence. From an area of hardly 18 sq km, Bangalore raced past the conical towers erected by Gowda II and this year encompassed a total of 600 sq km and was still expanding. So rapidly has Bangalore been growing that while in 1941 it was the 16th-largest city in India, 10 years later it had moved to the eighth position and by 1971 was seventh. In the past decade, it moved up two notches to stand fifth in the country, next

nkey Tank (right) which is now suffocated by a belt of high-rise buildings



VISHNU MATHUR, who holds a doctorate from London University, is among those who have made a mark in the small-scale industries which formed the backbone of Bangalore's phenomenal growth. Mathur, a former executive of a giant multinational corporation, was impressed with Bangalore's "special place in electronics" and set up an electronic component industry in 1969 in the Rajajinagar Industrial Estate. Another reason why Mathur chose Bangalore, as he shyly admits, was that "I couldn't miss my beer, and the city has the best". Mathur also points out that the city had good infrastructure facilities like schools, housing and entertainment. Starting with an initial turnover of Rs 2 lakh in 1972, Mathur touched the Rs 60 lakh figure last year and was awarded the President's Gold Medal for import substitution in 1981.



KUMAR NARAYAN*, 34, *from Calicut in Kerala, came to the city seven years ago when he couldn't find a job in his own district. Kumar is part of the huge influx of migrant labour from neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, who have found work in plenty after the industrial boom began in Bangalore. Starting as a helper in a small-scale industry making precision mining products in Peenya, Kumar, who used to earn Rs* 3 *a day, is now a grinder in charge of a section of* 10 *workers and draws a salary of Rs* 500 *a month. But Kumar complains: "We get work in Bangalore easily because there are so many jobs. But wages are low. I spend most of my salary on food and house rent." Kumar now shares a room with two others in Chokkasandra village near Peenya where they pay Rs* 120 *a month as rent. But he finds Bangalore a good city to live in because there is never a language problem and "we can adjust and live easily here".

to Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

This explosion was triggered by the unprecedented development of industries in the city which followed two distinct phases: in the pre-1965 period, the mammoth public sector industries were established and in the post-1970 development, when the state had an abundance of power, it threw the city doors open to entrepreneurs from all over the country. G.V.K. Rao, 62, former chief secretary of the state and member, Planning Commission, and now part of the Janata Government's "think-tank", boasts: "Bangalore's growth is a success story unsurpassed in India. It was a carefully foisted development intended to develop a cosmopolitan attitude. No absolute poverty. No great riches. That was our philosophy for Bangalore. We wanted it to be a city at best of the middle-middle class. No Birlas or Tatas were invited to start industries. We didn't want big private houses. On the one hand, we wanted big public sector industries. In the private sector we preferred small-scale industries. What we wanted was a professionally competent, managerial class."

Aeronautics Centre: HAL was started by business magnate Walchand Hirachand in 1940 as an overhauling station for British aircraft during the Second World War before the Union Defence Ministry took it over in 1951. Today it has a turnover of Rs 227 crore employing more than 40,000 people, half of them stationed in Bangalore, and has manufactured 2,000 aircaft, apart from designing a dozen of them. The spin-off benefit of having the country's only aircraft manufacturing corporation has been far-reaching, making Bangalore the key centre for aeronautics in the country. As S.C. Keshu, HAL's director for planning, puts it: "It was like a flower attracting eminent bees." It attracted several key aeronautical research institutes such as the National Aeronautical Laboratory, the Aeronautical Development Establishment, the Institute for Aviation Medicine and the Aircrafts and Systems Testing Establishment which recently made news by selecting India's first cosmonaut.

Bangalore's dust-free climate proved ideal for BEL, which set up its factory in a prisoner of war camp and manufactured initially obsolete microwave equipment. Today it employs 14,000 people and has a turnover of Rs 130 crore. One out of every two TV tubes of the estimated 4 lakh tubes manufactured in the country is made by BEL in its Bangalore factory. Of the total production of 120 million semiconductors BEL manufactures 45 million. Apart from this BEL manufactures X-ray tubes, radars, crystals, and microwave equipment. Says N. Krishnan, BEL's managing director: "Bangalore has become the nucleus for electronics in India."

NOT ONL
60 per cent of India's telecommu
equipment is manufactured by publ
giant ITI in its sprawling factory
Madras Road. The company's turn
grown from an initial turnover of Rs
to a phenomenal Rs 157 crore last
Bangalore complex accounting for
crore. It has become a large multi-uni
trial complex with the production
entire range of telecommunications
ment spread over nine factories,
which are located in Bangalore em
18,400 people. Every two out of th
phone instruments manufactured
country are made by its Bangalore
in addition to manufacturing two-th
the automatic exchanges and trans
equipment in the country.

Big Manufacturer: Making fo
on India's technological sands sin
HMT has grown into one of the world's
machine tools manufacturers, expor
more than 50 countries and has div
into watch-making with an annual
of Rs 300 crore. The Bangalore unit
employs 9,000 people accounts for o
of its total machine tools product
one-fourth of its watch productio
itself controls half the country's
tools production and accounts for at
per cent of the total watch produc

These massive public sector
foundations for Bangalore's fantasti
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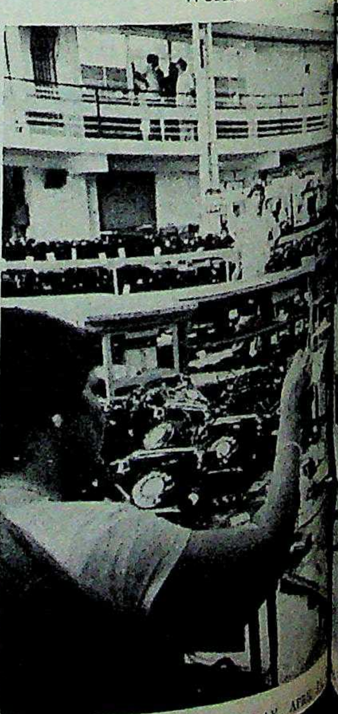
Workers in the ITI f



paradise into a pulsating industria-
real boom was heralded in 1965
state inaugurated the Sharavathy
tric project which was to generate
, increasing Karnataka's power
-fold by 1972. "We had to in-
or else power would go waste,"
S. Seshadri, former managing dir-
the Karnataka State Finance
, which offered loans at low
terest to encourage new industries.
ately for Bangalore, it was a time
of the other industrial citties were
through a critical phase. The Naxa-
ment was gaining strength in Cal-
ding shivers down industrialists'
Bombay was saturated and labour
ming militant. At the same time,
industrialists in East Africa were
over the Ugandan crisis created by
and were looking for a way out.
lists searched for greener pastures
India. Madras was not such a hot
, although the weather certainly
ly because it had become chauvi-
th the Dravida Munnetra Kazha-
) party grabbing power from the
. Bangalore was ideal: labour was
docile; power was surplus; land
sold at throw-away prices; and big
sector industries offered a ready
"What followed was a deluge," says

Mecca: Bangalore prepared
meet the new flood of industrialists.
formed the Karnataka Small-Scale
Development Corporation
and the Karnataka Industrial Areas
ment Board (KIADB) to coordinate the growth. The KSSIDC formed the first industrial estate in Rajajinagar, at the northern limits of the city, and completed 116 sheds. It soon had to expand it to a small village called Peenya where another 400 sheds were built. The sheds having a plinth area of 5,000 sq ft were leased out at monthly rents varying from Rs 800 to Rs 1,200. Meanwhile, the KIADB acquired lands in the suburbs of the city and sold it to industrialists at the incredibly low price of Rs 10,000 an acre. Overnight Bangalore became the new Mecca for industrialists.

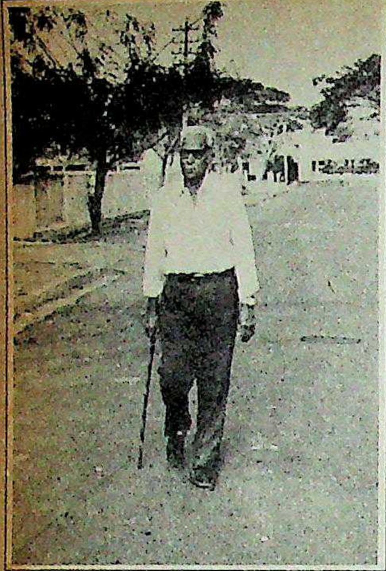
ers in the ITI fa enal growth

From Calcutta, the Transport Corporation of India (TCI), which was one of the largest transport networks in the country, decided to move its operations out of the state because of the growing Naxalite problem. S.N. Agarwal, 37, a TCI partner, bought 37 acres of land in the Whitefield industrial area and set up a mini steel plant. In the past decade, the steel plant's turnover has grown from an initial Rs 1.64 crore to Rs 10 crore. From Bombay, A.P. Mehta, 61, a metal merchant, who initially supplied copper and wire rods to ITI, moved to Peenya Industrial Estate, established a cable industry and later diversified into chemicals and dyes. Today his cable industry turnover has leapt from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 crore and the Mehta group of industries has a total turnover of Rs 30 crore. From Nairobi, Gujarati businessman Kakubhai Lakhani, 58, set up a soft drink bottling plant in the Mysore Road industrial estate and is now bottling his own brands successfully. Last year, he was selling eight lakh cases with an estimated turnover of Rs 1.5 crore. Like Lakhani, almost 50 families from East Africa have moved to Bangalore and set up industries ranging from garment exports to plastic ware.

Diverse Products: As a result, in the past decade more than 300 medium-scale industries have been established and small-scale industries have jumped from a meagre 802 in 1970 to a phenomenal 10,457 last year accounting for a third of such industries found in the state. In fact the Peenya Industrial Estate, consisting of 1,200 small-scale industries, is the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia. Products as diverse as razor blades, paints, drugs, plastic goods, glass, flooring tiles, batteries, tractors, lubricants, slippers, steel and graphite are being manufactured by the new industries. Already there are eight industrial estates girdling the city and the KSSIDC plans to extend the Peenya Industrial Estate into its third phase, apart from establishing new ones, such as Veerasandra and Yelahanka, both about 15 km from downtown Bangalore.

In fact, every day about three small-scale industries come up in Bangalore and two out of three belong to industrialists coming from outside the state. "We are still behind the

RENU and GEORGE KOSHY came to Bangalore six years ago for different reasons. Renu, 32, who works as a schoolteacher in a public school, had fond memories of the city: of its gardens, its cold coffee, an old boy-friend. George, 34, a sales engineer in a cutting tool manufacturing company, was tired of the hustle and bustle of Bombay. Neither of them has regretted their decision. Says Renu: "Each one can do their own thing in the city. There's so much time here because everything is near and you don't have to spend two hours reaching your work spot unlike Bombay." She is helping orphaned children and is currently selling raffle tickets to collect money for their welfare. Renu finds the city growing so fast that "it's changing from minute to minute and even a tree outside my house seems to grow so quickly". Both of them find the house rents too high and she says that to buy a house in Bangalore "you have to be a little millionaire or black marketeer". George is perturbed by the speed at which Bangalore is growing. Says he: "If it continues like this I'll clear out."



JANKIDAS KAPUR, a 70-year-old retired Brigadier who was posted to Bangalore in 1938 as a young lieutenant recalls: "It was a lazy town. It was a you and I place. Everybody knew everyone." Kapur remembers that life was relaxed and full of sports like hunting and polo and every week-end there was a ball. Everyone had large houses with big gardens and a dozen servants. In fact Kapur used to hunt partridges on the spot where he built his house in Defence Colony. He liked Bangalore so much that he not only came for his honeymoon but in 1970, after his retirement, he decided to settle down here. Being a veterinary doctor, he runs a dog clinic and treats something like 500 dogs and is president of two kennel clubs. Says he: "We pensioners are not wanted in the city any more. We are not part of the mainstream of commercial people. Bangalore has gone away from Bangaloreans." In the old days they used to laugh when people in other cities used to complain about water or electricity shortages. Now Bangalore has all these ailments. "Prices are so high that no pensioner can afford to stay here," he complains, "and the climate has changed."

demand," said S.R. Vijay, additional secretary for industries, "another 500 applications are pending." The total work force in the city has grown from one lakh to almost six lakh, making it one-fifth of the total population; most of the unskilled labour comes from neighbouring Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. In fact every day 10 new jobs are advertised through the employment exchanges in the city and last year a total of 10,094 vacancies were notified by private companies.

Migrant Industrialists: Interestingly, two-thirds of the industrialists have come from outside the state. In the Peenya Industrial Estate the percentage-wise break up is: Andhra Pradesh 20, Gujarat 15, Maharashtra 10, Tamil Nadu five, Kerala five, Uttar Pradesh one, Karnataka 35 and the remaining is scattered among the other states. Much of the growth has been possible because of the typical accommodating nature of Bangaloreans who are known for their warmth and docility. Admits Agarwal: "Any other city would have thrown us out, but Bangalore welcomed us with open arms and we have now become part of the city."

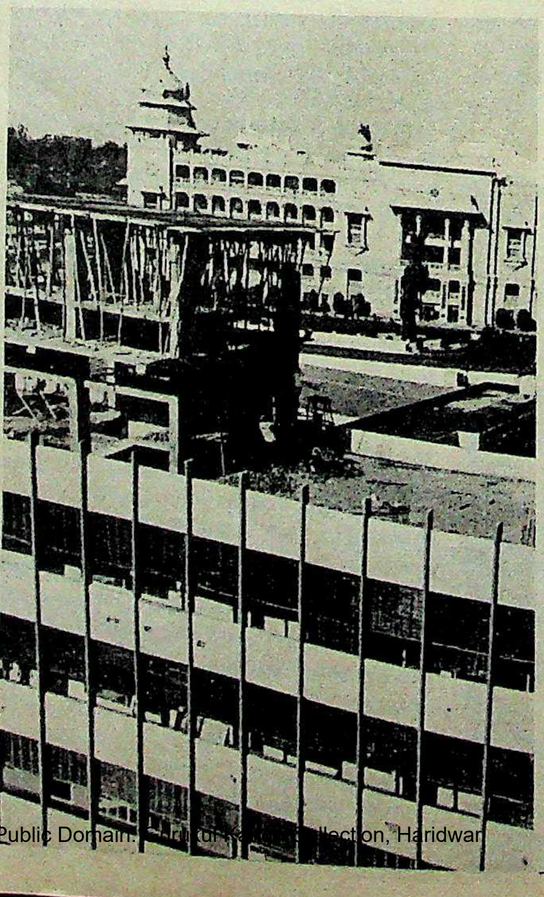
While the latest census is still to analyse the languages spoken by the people, in 1971 itself when the flood of immigrants had just begun, only 50 per cent of the population spoke Kannada, the local language. Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Hindi and Malayalam were the other major languages and Gu Bengali were growing in usage.

BANGAL new found prosperity has spawned tastic building boom. To meet the of housing and the demand for co establishments, the City Corporatio tioned more than 180 complexes with rage height of six storeys mostly lo the heart of the city. As a result, the buildings foisted mainly by fly- Bombay construction companies no nate the skyline and have replaced al the old buildings in the city. Land pri shot up phenomenally. In Com Street, the city's premier shopping land was available seven years ago fo per sq ft; it has now leapt to Rs 350 hatma Gandhi Road, the city's sho prices have moved up from Rs 80 per Rs 400. In the exclusive Palace Orch sidential area, the site value, which w vering at Rs 30 per sq ft has now go Rs 190, a 600 per cent increase. The dential areas have not been spared and in Indiranagar, Rajajinagar, mangala and Jayanagar, where si used to average Rs 25 per sq ft, the now touched Rs 100.

Having a farm in the has become a fashion wh stars seem to be setting the Already Feroz Khan (se Dharmendra, Waheeda R and comedian Mehmood bought land in the suburbs agricultural land prices are rapidly. On the Hosur R acre of land used to cost Rs about four years ago; tod worth Rs 50,000. Land pri all national highways le Bangalore have gone up p nally and are between Rs and Rs 1 lakh an acre. prices too have gone up used to cost Rs 80 a sq ft W up to Rs 225 a sq ft. W years ago a two-bedroom could easily be built for Rs today the same house wo to be built at a cost of Rs

House rents too have and a two-bedroom house areas like Indiranagar a mahal Extension now go 2,000. In fact a two house now averages Rs most areas when hardly ago it was Rs 350. In

Bangalore's building boom: signs of the times



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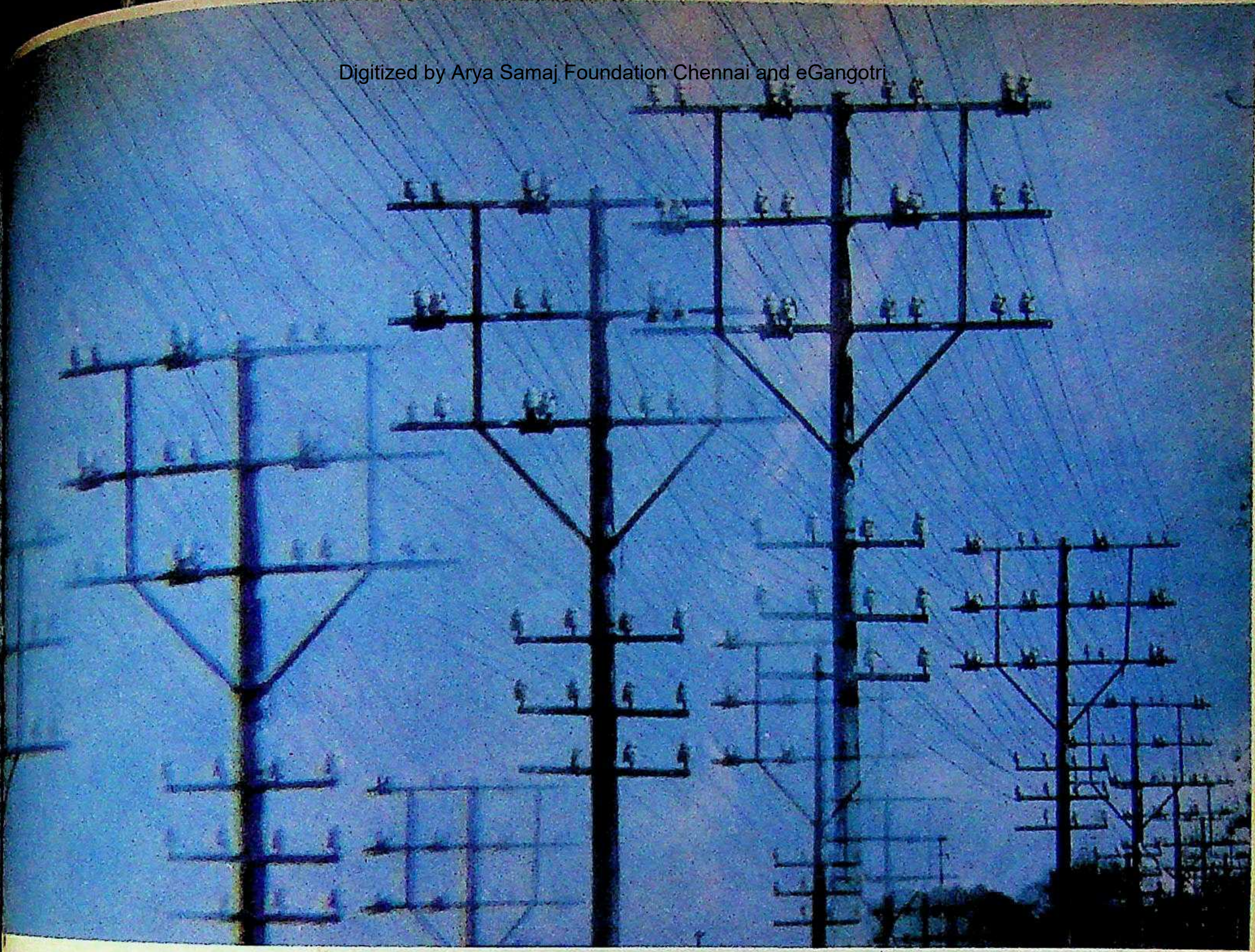

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Bangalore boom

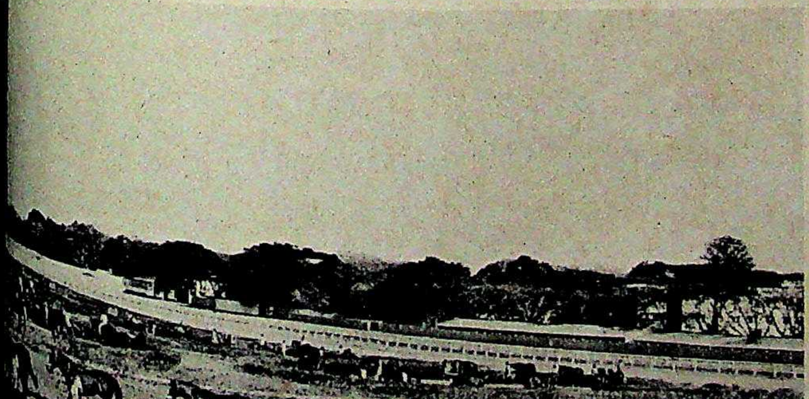
of the high-rise builders bought
ictorian houses with large gardens
prices shot up. Among the few resi-
resisted the temptation to sell
were the three Kothawala sisters
Grant Road and have been in
for the last 25 years. They were of-
lakh for their entire house and an
in the new complex. When they
they were offered Rs 4 lakh for their
hich they also turned down. Said
Kothawala: "Who wants 20 hou-
milies, 100 children and 20 dogs in
compound? We want our peace
We turned down the offer."
alore has been booming in other
like horse-racing for instance. The
h was one of the minor racing
o decades ago has now emerged as
er racing city. With races being held
nths a year, the Bangalore Turf
c) conducts the largest number of
he country and boasts of the highest
ney. Says Kumar Siddanna, chair-
r proudly: "We are number one

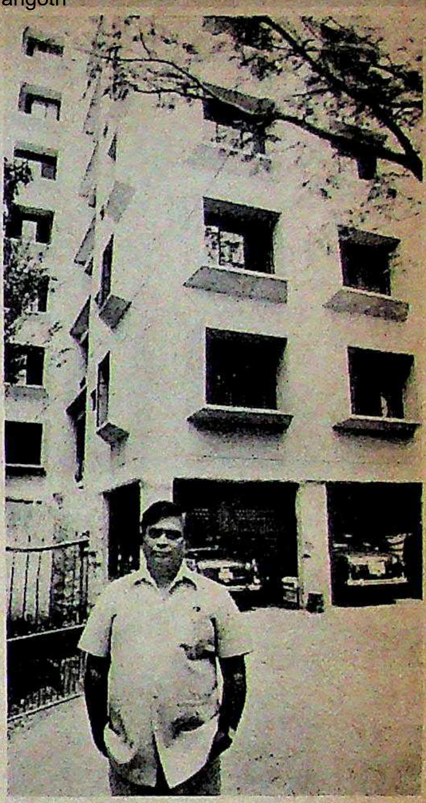
money flowing in, the hotel indus-
been doing roaring business. The
e houses and clubs have been brus-
by a host of flashy restaurants ser-
riety of cuisines. In the past decade,
30 of them have come up and
film stars too have put their hand in
Amar Lulla, 46, an enterprising
sinessman, has been instrumental
them in. To begin with, Lulla tied
indi film villain Amjad Khan and
at was then considered a fabu-
gned restaurant on top of Bangalore's tallest building—the 24-storeyed public utility complex. Last year, after differences cropped up between them, Lulla sold his shares to Khan and with Sanjeev Kumar opened a lavish restaurant on Brigade Road which also houses the city's only recognised disco. Says Lulla: "Business is so good in Bangalore that any good restaurant can easily get a large clientele."

ALL THE leading hotel chains in the country are moving into Bangalore to cash in on the boom. India Tourism Development Corporation's Hotel Ashok (187 rooms) set the trend in 1971. This prompted Spencer's West End Hotel (140 rooms) to upgrade its services to meet the new challenge. The latest extravaganza has been Welcomgroup's Windsor Manor (140 rooms), which has a Victorian facade designed in keeping with Bangalore's past. While the Taj group has almost completed its unit on Mahatma Gandhi Road (180 rooms), the Oberois have purchased land and are likely to set up the hotel soon. Bangalore has also come to be regarded as a conference city with more than 100 business houses and institutions holding their annual meetings in these hotels every year. Says Colonel N.S. Uthaya, general manager, Ashok Hotel: "Initially we used to get only a tourist crowd, but now most of them are businessmen. We hold a major conference in our hotel almost every month."

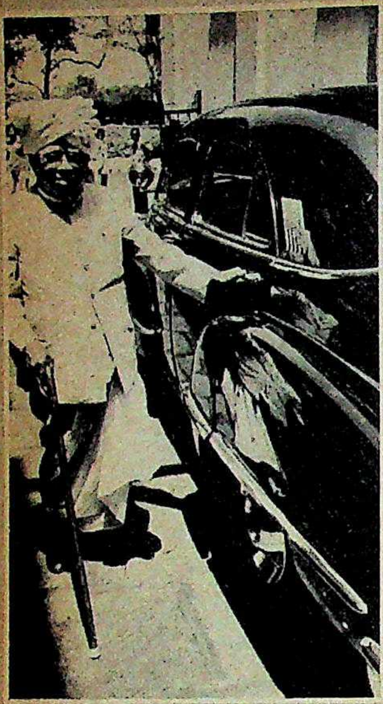
With the huge influx of migrant popu-

galore boom has made the city number one in the country's racing calendar





C.R. NAGARAJA SETTY, 49, is a typical example of the new constructors who have moved into the city with their men, machines and material and altered Bangalore's skyline with their high-rise apartments. Setty, a civil engineer, used to take up contract work for government public works departments all over the country. He moved to Bangalore three years ago and bought a 24,000 sq ft plot of land on Cunningham Crescent Road, one of the prime residential areas in the city at a dirt cheap Rs 25 per sq ft. The same plot of land is now worth Rs 200 a sq ft. Putting up an eight-storey complex, housing 64 apartments, Setty sold them at between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 3 lakh each. He has now bought another plot of land and plans to put up a similar block of apartments. Defending high-rise buildings against the complaints of old Bangaloreans, Setty argues vociferously: "These are not eyesores but a boon to the city and the only way to solve its housing problem."



K.N. GURUSWAMY*, 83, *arrack king and governing director of the* Herald *group of newspapers, has seen Bangalore grow before his eyes. Born in Bellary* 350 *km away from Bangalore, Guruswamy came to Bangalore in* 1908 *when his father took up an arrack contract. He recalls: "It was just like a big village at that time. The city was full of tanks and it used to be much cooler. We used to call it the London cold." After his father's death Guruswamy took over the family business and in* 1948 *bought the Kannada daily* Mathrubhumi, *which had a circulation of a meagre* 1,000, *with relatives. Simultaneously he launched the* Deccan Herald *and its Kannada counterpart* Prajavani. *Today these papers have become the largest circulated dailies in Bangalore.

Concerned about the city's growth, Guruswamy says: "Now we don't have the salubrious climate. All trees have been cut and tanks have gone dry." But he adds resignedly: "Whether we like it or not the city will continue to grow."

lation, films have become possibly the most popular form of entertainment in the city. The number of theatres has grown from hardly 12 in 1970 to 100. In the heart of the city the 500 metre-long Kempe Gowda Road now has 22 theatres in its vicinity. Indicative of the cosmopolitan culture is the fact that Kannada films play second fiddle to the rest of the language films with English, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil dominating.

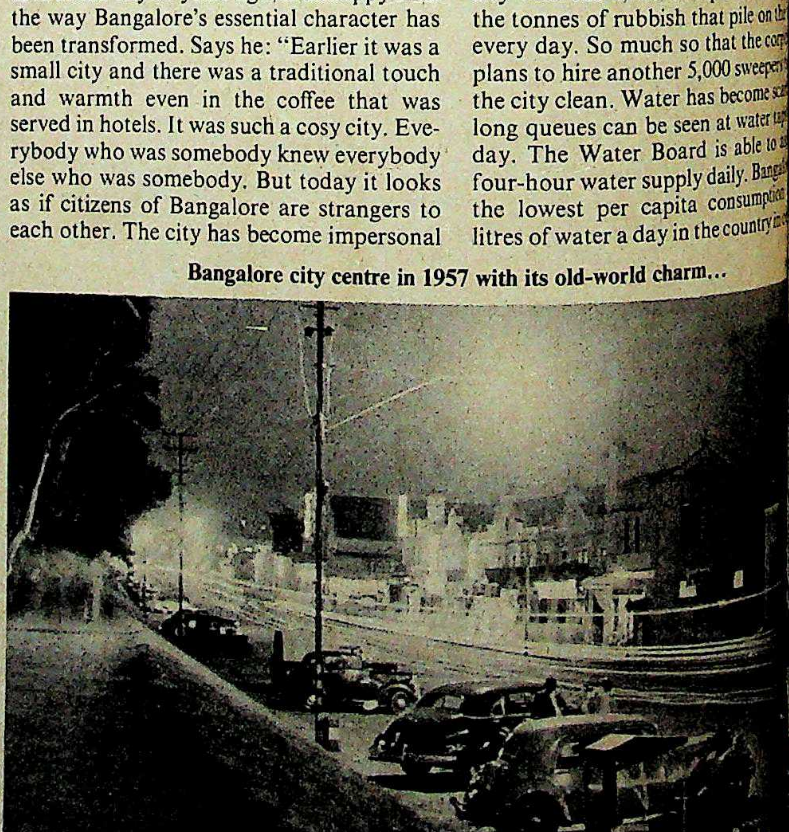
Newspapers and periodicals too have been flourishing and in the last six years the city has acquired two new dailies—*The Times of Deccan* and *Southern Speaker*—and two weekly magazines—*City Tab* and *Sunday Midday*. *The Times of India* group plans to launch a daily soon. But last fortnight the *Speaker* wound up. *Deccan Herald*, the oldest English newspaper in the city, has doubled its circulation in the city and now prints 80,000 copies every morning. It plans to launch an eveninger soon and K.N. Hari Kumar, managing director, says: "It's a new vibrant city and our profits and sales have been increasing rapidly."

Despite their accommodating nature old Bangaloreans are disconcerted by the change sweeping over the city as a result of the host of new migrants with their disparate backgrounds and the money they bring in. Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, who built his house in an exclusive residential area in the city 10 years ago, is unhappy with the way Bangalore's essential character has been transformed. Says he: "Earlier it was a small city and there was a traditional touch and warmth even in the coffee that was served in hotels. It was such a cosy city. Everybody who was somebody knew everybody else who was somebody. But today it looks as if citizens of Bangalore are strangers to each other. The city has become impersonal and there is an attitude of unconce new city I find a clash between valu the throes of giving birth to a ne and character for Bangalore."

The juicy apple is already beg spoil in parts. Despite the flurry of c tion activity, the population growth h so phenomenal that the city still fa mendous housing shortage. Acco conservative estimates by the B Development Authority (BDA), the short of 88,000 houses. "Bangalore i us," complains IISC Director Ram He points out that one of the main that most scientists flocked to Bang the supposedly low cost of living, bu none of them can survive with the hig rents. For the poor, Bangalore ho out of sight and as a result almost 1 have come up higgledy piggledy in t

Inadequate Amenities: The mea amenities are already buckling un pressure of the city's intense grow Bangalore Transport Corporation (its fleet of 840 buses is bursting at the and continues to lose heavily. Last lost at the rate of Rs 1.5 lakh a day yearly loss totalling Rs 3 crore. BTC estimate that they need at least an buses to meet the demand. Also i are the City Corporation and the Board. Bangalore is fast becoming a city with the 6,000 sweepers unable the tonnes of rubbish that pile on the every day. So much so that the corp plans to hire another 5,000 sweepers the city clean. Water has become sc long queues can be seen at water ta day. The Water Board is able to four-hour water supply daily. Bang the lowest per capita consumptio litres of water a day in the country

Bangalore city centre in 1957 with its old-world charm...



…st cities which average 120 litres.

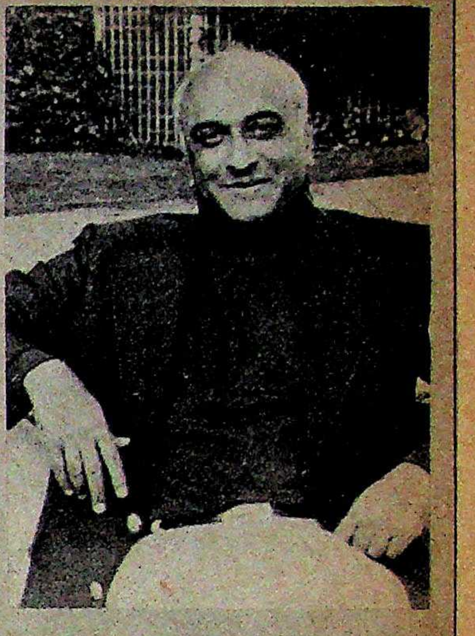
…led **Police:** Equally gloomy are …lice who have been facing mountains in controlling traffic and pre… The number of vehicles on the …e shown a 400 per cent increase …00 in 1971 to its present size of two … a result, accidents have also doubled … every day there is one fatal and 12 …cidents in the city. On the seamier …e has gone up; murders have trebled … thefts have more than doubled. …, there were 8,554 thefts and 63 …committed in the city. Prostitution, …ed to flourish in a few lodges, has … on the streets; women can be seen …iting customers. The number of …, most of them in seedy joints, have … from hardly two in the '70s to 10

…e state already faces a disastrous …uation. When the Janata Government … charge last January, it immediately …duced a 50 per cent power cut on …s using high tension power and …ceiling limit on power to other industries …rnataka was already facing a power … of 10 to 33 per cent in the various … The small-scale industries, which … per cent power cut, have been badly … fortnight, the Peenya Industries …on submitted a white paper to the …ent on its woes. The association …d that of the 1,200 industries almost …tries face imminent closure which …in 4,000 workers getting laid off if …er situation does not improve. The … facing the industrialists is Rs 2.20 …arns Vishnu Mathur, president of …ciation: "If the power situation …t ease, industrial activity in Peenya …ompletely crippled."

BUT WITH power and water becoming scarce, Bangalore is already losing the charm which initially attracted so many industrialists. The older private companies like Motor Industries Company (MICO), Kirloskars and Amco Batteries are unhappy with the way Bangalore has been allowed to grow. MICO, which was set up under German collaboration in 1951, now controls 90 per cent of the spark-plug and fuel injection pump industry in the country. To meet the shortage it has installed generators which meet 50 per cent of its power requirements and dug borewells to supply one third of its water needs. Says Vikram Bhat, 48, MICO's commercial director: "There's no point in allowing Bangalore to grow without developing infrastructure facilities." Complains S.G. Ramachandra, 58, who was till recently senior vice-president, Kirloskar group of industries: "Infrastructure facilities have never kept pace with industrial growth in the city. We are caught in a fix. The demand for energy is growing faster than the supply being made by the Electricity Board. I think we have lost the battle in Bangalore. We may be heading for disaster."

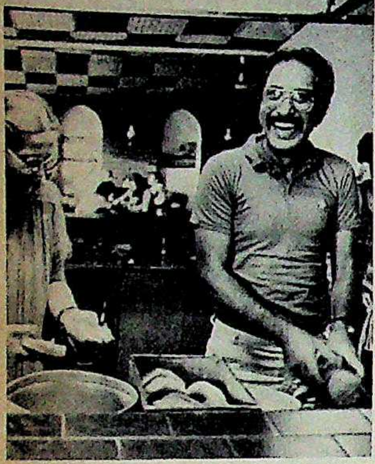
The Town Planning Department is more than disraught with the phenomenal growth of Bangalore which busted its carefully laid plans for the city. Although it chalked out an Outline Development Plan for the city as early as 1962 and followed it up with a Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) in 1976, neither of these anticipated the population explosion. The CDP had estimated that the population would grow from 16.54 lakh in 1971 to 22 lakh in 1981,

…and Bangalore's main shopping centre today: growing pressures



***M.D. NARAYAN*, 54, former MP and coffee planter was aghast when he found two eight-storey apartment houses coming up on either side of his magnificent house which has a swimming pool and garden. Said he: "My privacy was invaded." Raj Mahal Vilas Extension is considered Bangalore's most affluent residential area, and residents were shocked when high-rise builders moved in.**

Along with three neighbours, Narayan filed a writ petition in the high court against the Bombay-based Bakhtawar Construction Company (BCC) on the ground that it had violated zonal regulations for residential areas. Last June the high court quashed the licences issued to BCC by the city corporation as they contravened the city's outline development plan. The judgement, however, came after the builders had constructed the apartments and now some owners have gone on appeal to the Supreme Court. Till the Supreme Court delivers judgement, Narayan has to tolerate the invasion of his privacy, especially when he has a swim or takes a walk in his spacious grounds.



***BHUSHAN OBEROI** runs a tiny fast-food restaurant with cane chairs in the basement floor of a five-storeyed building on the busy Residency Road, serving pizzas, hamburgers and salads. "We wanted to make a little Italy here." explained its 38-year-old proprietor. Five years ago Oberoi and his Austrian wife, Marieluise, gave up their lucrative jobs as catering managers in multinational hotels abroad and came to the city. Explains Oberoi: "It was like seeing a child growing from an adolescent to a man. Right now, Bangalore is at the prime of its life." And with Bangalore's growth, the Oberois' business too has expanded and they have not only extended their restaurant but also started a boutique. Marieluise likes Bangalore because she thinks it's more of a "Western city" than an Indian one, but she is disappointed that it is fast becoming a "dirty city in an un-Indian way". She finds the city's ill-planned growth reflected in trees being cut indiscriminately, increasing traffic and clogged sewage systems. Complains Marieluise: "Right now the pollution is so high that it's much healthier to breathe through a cigarette."*

and to 29 lakh in 1991; by 2001 it would touch a maximum of 38 lakh. But with the city growing so rapidly, the population is likely to exceed 38 lakh by the end of the decade itself.

It anticipated a housing shortage of 83,880 in 1991 but by 1981 itself the city had touched the figure. In 1974 industries occupied 1,805 hectares of land or 11 per cent of the total area; by 1980 the Government had developed 6,000 hectares more for industries, half the planned figure for industrial growth to be touched by 2001. As a result, the BDA now has to revise its development plans which had become outdated within a span of five years. Says the gaunt T.M. Malaviah, town planning director: "It's baffling. The rate at which Bangalore is growing, we have to race to keep our civic services of the same standard." BUAC's Parthasarathy is more blunt when he says: "Bangalore's growth has been a result of a confused concentration of adhocism continuously embarrassing a grand design which is often recognised by default."

Development Dilemma: With the planning going awry, the future city of India faces a bleak future if it is unable to pull up its bootstraps. As G.V.K. Rao puts it: "Bangalore is like a man grown too fat. The dilemma faced by planners is how to slim it down without killing the city." The planners' efforts to establish satellite towns in nearby Kengeri and Yelahanka to ease the pressure on the city have failed miserably with Bangalore unable to cut the "umbilical cord" for civic amenities. As a result, these towns have become newer extensions of Bangalore city. In a bid to solve the city's headaches, the state Government recently formed the Bangalore Metropolitan Development Council, which has representatives of all departments concerned with the city's development, so that the city may be planned in a coordinated manner. Meanwhile, the Karnataka State Council for Science and Technology, an advisory council to the Government, plans to undertake a detailed study of Bangalore's growth and suggest ways out of the imbroglio.

RIGHT now Bangalore's fantastic growth has caught the planners on the wrong foot and everyone is busy fire-fighting with no one daring to think of Bangalore in 2001 A.D. The planners are trying to work out a solar system concept with Bangalore as the sun and self-sufficient industrial townships within a radius of 50 km to 100 km to be developed as 'planets'. As a move in this direction the Government has already banned new large-scale from coming to the city and has an that no more incentives would be medium and small-scale industries units within the city limits. The Government plans to select areas lik napatna, Maddur, Dodballapur, garam· and Tumkur, which are radius of 50 km to 100 km from B and develop them as wholly self- townships.

Meanwhile, to meet the housing ge, new extensions are to be chalked the suburbs and high-rise buildings allowed to be built in these places structures would be banned in the co city. The Government plans to have belt around the city by planting 75 lak The Government is now studying set of building bye-laws which ha drafted by the city corporation and to pass it soon.

According to the new Bangalore would be divided in zones: the central administrative intensely populated business areas newer extensions. In the central adm tive area consisting of the Vidhana S as its core and a radius of 1.6 km fr building would be allowed to go m four floors and all structures would be cleared by the Urban Arts Comm as to "preserve the architectural be the area".

In the intensely populated are sisting mainly of the old fort busine like Chickpet, Nagarthpet, Cubbo Balepet, which already are highly co no building would be allowed to than two floors. In the new exten Rajajinagar, Hosahalli, Indiranaga nagar, Banashankari, Koramang Ganganahalli, which are all within the central area, buildings would be to rise up to seven floors but strict la be laid down to ensure that there adequate set-backs so that the wouldn't become congested like th ones.

If these new bye-laws are passed forced strictly Bangalore would st wed to grow but in a more orderly while retaining its old world charm be the hub of industrial activity really being smogged down. As C ter Hegde says: "If immediate actio to control the crazy, unplanned the city it would be possible to ma liveable. Otherwise it may go the w big cities. We must regulate growth." Or else if Bangalore explode haphazardly the boom it so much prosperity may easily of death.

—RAJ

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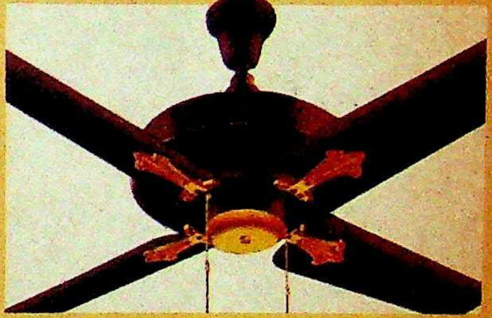

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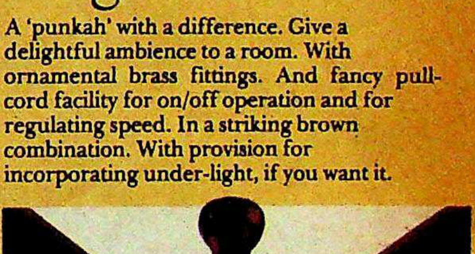

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he Burning Issue

URSULLA Andersen, a school-teacher from Stockholm, Sweden, and a passionate India-buff, had swum barely 10 metres from Varanasi's fabled amedh Ghat last fortnight when touched her back. Startled, felt the object, and closed her eyes, by horror. It was the putrid, half- from a human corpse, floating the river. Andersen bolted back and said she would pack and be day, if possible", cancelling the rest ree-week $5,000 (Rs 50,000) Indian

ersen's experience was in no way Even the most lenient chemical of the Ganga water at Varanasi pass it as fit for human use. The 7 curve of the river, where six million votees bathe every year, is contami- incredible amounts of biological cal filth. It contains the remains of an bodies burnt every year at the -old city's two cremation Manikarnika and Harishchandra.

al pyres are lit day and night at the Manikarnika takes most of the 25,000 Hindus are consigned to each year here. The left bank of bound by two channels, Varuna is regarded by the faithful as the red spot at which to depart this fe.

ly Monopoly: There lies the rub. s of Varanasi are so overworked is frequently not enough time for parting to be well and truly com- What is more, the two ghats are the control of a bizarre dynasty of rajas' (dom, or the one who cre- with the reigning dom raja, Kailash Chowdhury, a 46-year-old dark raffishly curly hair and paan-stained having made the cremation in- Varanasi an extremely profitable

has also virtually single-handedly installation of an electric crema- over 10 years, and it is only now proposal is being reviewed with of success. Under the prompt- Dayal, the public-spirited ad- of the corporation, the state sanctioned Rs 11 lakh last wards the cost of the project, to be Rs 26 lakh. Dayal's term ally ended last month but he is to pursue the project till it finally becomes a reality.

Chowdhury is fuming. Said he: "If the corporation does not publicly declare within a month that it is abandoning the scheme, I am going to court against it. This is naked interference with the religious faith of the Hindus." Chowdhury is not a man to be taken lightly. Deriving his authority from a sanction given to one of his supposed ancestors by the legendary Raja Harishchandra in days of yore, Chowdhury and his family are still allowed by the authorities to treat the

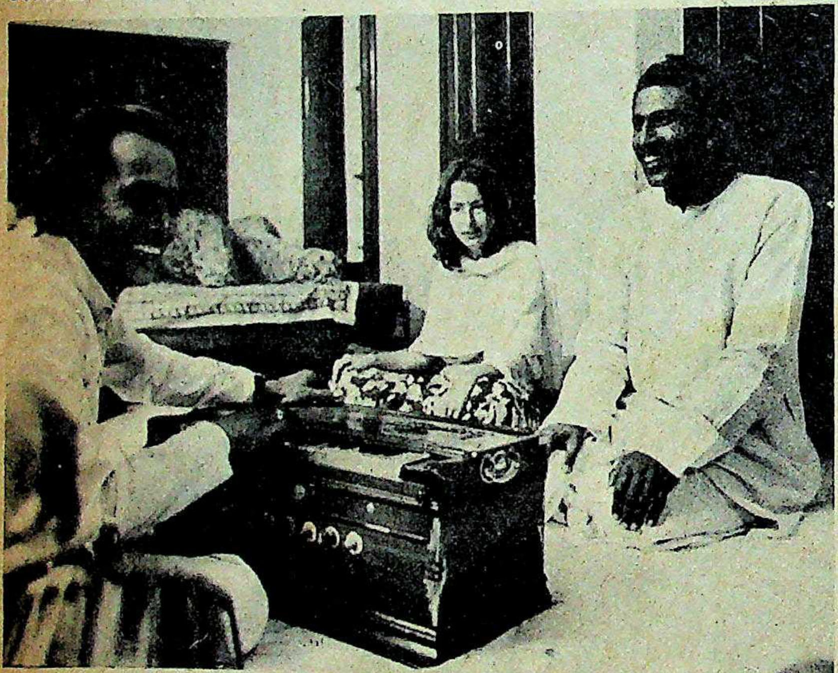
PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Chowdhury (top) and a body being carried for cremation: profitable enterprise

d love.
f fun, laugh
last Lt
ombay 400

two ghats as their own and to charge levies from people who bring their dead to be cremated.

Lucrative Business: It is, expectedly, a chain of extortion which operates on inflated prices: of logs, the shroud, the bamboo frame and the gifts demanded of people before the pyre is lit. Those who cannot afford it are obliged to make do with lesser quantities of logs and are often asked to make room for wealthier dead in the queue. Chowdhury and his son Ranjit, with their 47 staffers keep constant vigil at the two ghats. The levy, which they call *daan*, or sacrifice, begins at Rs 100 but can go up to Rs 5,000 or more and often includes gifts of land; gift deeds have been known to have been executed at the ghat itself.



Veer Bhadra Mishra (right): clean-up campaign

Though land gifts have become rare now, Chowdhury claims to still own 40 acres at Karsaragaon, slap in the middle of the Varanasi cantonment area (current price: Rs 1 lakh an acre), two acres in the old city (price: Rs 2 lakh an acre), a large plot in Gaya and several smaller plots at Sasaram, Arrah and Balia towns. He claims to own four houses in Varanasi city, including two by each of the ghats.

The bargaining begins with the sale of the firelogs, which must be bought from the ghat itself at the two unlicensed depots. Chowdhury makes no secret of the fact that he has an "interest" in the shops. They sell logs at one rupee a kilogramme, which is 25 per cent more than the market price. The shroud is also meant to be bought from the ghat, at Rs 20 above the going price.

Normally it requires at least five to six quintals of logs to ensure proper cremation of a fully grown adult, but, after paying the levy at the ghat, very few people are left with enough cash to buy adequate wood. As a result, most of the poor have to make do with two quintals or less. During peak cremation hours, they are often hustled by Chowdhury's men after a minimal three hours or so, and are asked to douse the pyre with Ganga water even before the flames have completed their tasks. Hence the half burnt bodies. The ferocious looking dogs at the ghats frequently swim into the river and drag bodies ashore. Varanasi police registered over 100 complaints last year protesting the forcible and premature dousing of fires. According to an official of the Municipal Corporation, about 10,000 half-burnt bodies are pushed into the river at the two ghats every year.

IT WAS to prevent such abuse that the corporation mooted the idea of an electric crematorium in 1973. Within weeks, Chowdhury led a deputation to the corporation, urging it not to go through with the project as it would "offend the religious sentiments of the Hindus". The proposal was also resisted by the powerful mahants, or priests of Vishwanath Temple, and the Lucknow authorities vetoed it.

This time round, Chowdhury is unlikely to have his way. Early this year, a new movement, called the *Swachh Ganga* ('Clean Ganga' movement), sprang up in the city under the leadership of Veer Bhadra Mishra, 45, the chief priest of the Sank temple. Dark, tall and spright embodies a rare combination of the new, and is a man of science civil engineering at Banara University.

Mishra's outfit, supported number of the citizens, recently charter of demands which include for installation of an electric crem the ghat. The *Swachh Ganga* ca held seminars on the river bank an the streets of Varanasi carrying pla read: "Rid the Ganga of carcas "the dead should be cremated, no into the river". Says Mishra: "Th crematorium is a must. Nobody h to pollute the river in the name of

Confident: Chowdhury, howe fazed. Sitting in his orchard, a gift Benares royal family one hundred smelling profusely of country b surrounded by bare-bodied fell whom he described as his "co Chowdhury said: "The ghats are m property. So no electric crematoriu located there. Moreover, as lon family is alive, and our line conti ghastly business of distorting th death rites will not be tolera

Barring three private ghats, maining 77 ghats along the left ba river were taken over by the co under the Uttar Pradesh Ma Adhiniyam, 1959. As Dayal said: raja might say anything, but h jurisdiction over the ghats, nor is h ing levy by legal means. In the eyes is to be regarded as an encroach Chowdhury shrewdly observes "cannot be divorced from tradi that his earning was "perfectly pains to establish the legality of his he claimed that he had paid inco year. Said he: "Even the sark cognised my right to impose a levy

However, in order to avoid a with Chowdhury, Dayal, corporation's Chief Engine Bannerjee, recently selected a plot the left side of Harishchandra the electric pyre. Said Dayal: "On the electric pyre. Said Dayal: "Onl fees will be charged there." Its fou will have a turnover of 90 bodies a 20 a body, and no charge for fuel, to throw the dom raja out of bu

Reacting sharply to th Chowdhury was planning a dhar of the corporation office. He s entire Hindu society is with me." of his 'courtiers' put it poetically, can put out the fire of Mani glitters like a 'bright jewel' on th of the centuries-old city".

—SUMIT MIT

hai brings a touch of luxury to the business of pleasure. Royal Executive Class. To create this concept in business travel we started at the om — the seat. The Royal Executive Class seat a First Class seat on our 747's in every sense the word. Bigger. Wider. More comfortable. d it reclines a full twenty inches so that u can feel the difference as you travel ercontinental. To make room for s we created two spacious as. One located upstairs ere the First Class lounge ed to be. The other down low with only twenty four ats instead of the normal nty five. Now the aisle is not ly wider, but there's much more ace between your seat and the one in front. The food. Part of our exclusive service is serving great food in royal executive style. We go one better and give you a choice of menus. Other luxuries in the air include a selection of excellent wines and liqueurs, cheeseboards and baskets of tropical fruit. For your entertainment you can tune in to your kind of music. What's more, you can have all this for just the full economy fare, or a little extra on intercontinental flights to Australia and America. For the ultimate in Business Class, fly Thai's Royal Executive Class. It's got the right mix of business and pleasure.

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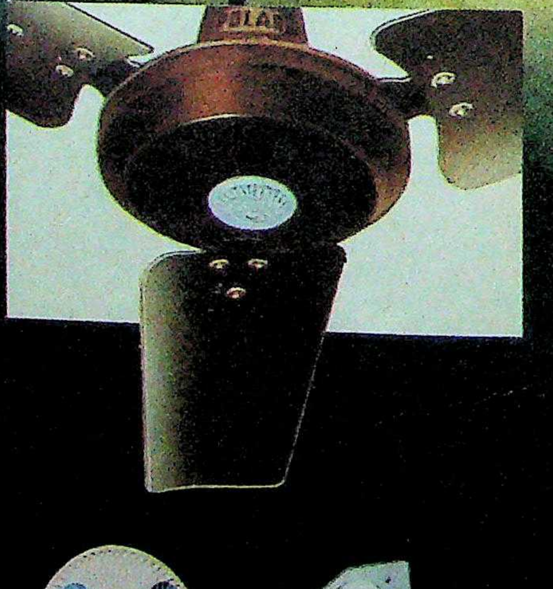

outliving hundred plus o rigid checks to ensure it be a lifelong companion. The powerful motor with dual ball bearing system, corrosion proof aluminium blades and the top quality regulator confirm smooth and swift performance through out the year. And the widest range of Fans from

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he Green Revolution

IFE-SIZE plastic replica of the
Pershing rocket carrying the banner
Greens in—rockets out" greets the
The venue is the headquarters in Bo-
e "Greens", a colourful conglomera-
pacifists, anti-nuclear crusaders, lef-
ologists, "God's children" and what
a. It is the evening of March 6, and
s of the general elections held on
in the Federal Republic of Germany
ling in from various constituencies.
sterous "Hurrah, we are winning!"
ered down to a few smiles and half-
d claps as news arrives that the
have just managed to cross the mini-
per cent hurdle and achieve their first
ry into the Bundestag (parliament).
e euphoria has died down. The pre-
opinion polls and other fore-
pundits had given the Greens
g from 6 to 7 per cent. The eco-
movement—now chiselled into
al party—could just overcome
parliamentary hurdle by get-
per cent, drawn mainly from
ervoir of voters of the Social
ratic Party (SPD) which was
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2 per cent compared to 42.9
t in 1980

rmined Campaign: The elec-
paign had been no smooth
r the Greens. Branded by cri-
chaotic and obstructionist for
to cooperate with the SPD mi-
Government in the Hamburg
nt and making the business
ment impossible which, incidental-
birth to the infamous connotation
e "Hamburg situation", the Green
ks to project itself as the dissenting
a frustration resulting from
t of the theory of unchecked eco-
growth at the expense of the envi-
—a self-styled alternative to the
r parties Christian Socialist Union
Christian Democratic Union (CDU),
Free Democratic Party (FDP).
problem facing the Greens in
coming parliamentary legislative
s one of agenda. The only two con-
s on which the party has mustered
are the controversial deployment of
iate missiles on German soil and the
of the proliferation of atomic
plants.

r Issues: The deployment of the
and Cruise missiles as a fitting reply
viet overweight in the SS-20 rockets,
f the two aspects of the NATO resolution of 1979, the other aspect being to hold a dialogue with the Soviet Union on reduction of this weaponry. Should the ongoing dialogue between the US and the Soviet Union in Geneva fail to produce any satisfactory solution leading to the dismantling of the Soviet SS-20 rockets, NATO will go ahead with deployment of the Pershing and Cruise missiles. The Greens are against this programme and have promised to launch a nation-wide agitation in case the new missiles are really deployed on German soil.

The other major issue—the use of atomic energy—fetches mixed reactions from the people. In a highly industrialised society, where two major "oil shocks" of the past decade have exposed the vulnerability of the country's economy to external forces, the need for diversified form of energy cannot be over-emphasised. Trade unions, for the first time, are giving massive support to official plans to resort to an increasing use of atomic energy to meet growth targets. The Greens have emotionalised the issue and have painted a nation-wide picture of a nuclear holocaust. The Harrisburg incident in the US unleashed a tidal wave of panic in the background of an already tempestuous sea, as reflected in the incidents at Brokdorf in northern Germany, or at the construction site of the western wing of Frankfurt airport.

An admirer congratulates Greens leader Petra Kelly: signal triumph

Development Programme: But the Greens have not been successful in convincing the majority of the German voters that they can provide a solution to the country's growing economic problems. With unemployment rearing its ugly head, the only visible solution lies in bolstering economic growth. This is unacceptable to the Greens. They call for diversification to other forms of energy like solar energy and wind, the development of which may take years, not to mention the exorbitant costs of using them as conventional energy.

A remarkable phenomenon of the ecological-cum-peace movement is that it has flourished in so-called "Scandilux" countries—essentially the predominantly Protestant Nordic and Benelux regions—and has little or no support in southern Catholic countries like Italy, France and Spain. The movement's electoral success in West Germany has given rise to fresh problems. The traditional four parties represented in the Bonn parliament have expressed fears that the Greens, if admitted to participate in the secret meetings of sensitive parliamentary committees on foreign affairs, interior, defence and security, would not hesitate to publicise secret material "if it was in the interests of the German public", as the movement's most profiled leader Petra Kelly stated recently.

Unorthodox Party: The entry of 28 Greens in the Bundestag is seen by some as a challenge to the parliamentary system. Many leading politicians of the other traditional parties have expressed fears over giving secret information to the Green parliamentarians unwilling to abide by the regulations governing maintenance of secrecy on sensitive issues.

The Greens have already voiced their claims for seating their parliamentarians in the interior, defence and foreign affairs' Committees, all of which handle secretive domestic, foreign and military issues. Sensitive matters are dealt with in these bodies. Should the Green parliamentarians not abide by the regulations of secrecy, they are liable to face prosecution.

As their first act after the election result, the Greens have called for the setting up of an investigation committee to look into alleged financial scandals involving prominent German politicians with the Flick group. However, such a move by the Greens would be successful if it was backed by at least one-fourth of the parliamentarians. The Greens alone do not command such a following.

Most members of the Greens are unorthodox in their appearance. A member of the Green party is usually portrayed as a bearded young man with drooping eyelids and a serious countenance. Some of the young parliamentarians of the Greens, attired in jeans and jackets, will at once pose a sharp contrast to the majority of the elegantly dressed parliamentarians of the other parties. Though many of its ideas are unrealistic and far-fetched, the Green party will provide some lively moments in the Bundestag.

—MANIK MEHTA in Bonn

RAJASTHAN

Scandals In The Sand

NEVER had the treasury benches listened so attentively to an opposition leader lambasting their government. Last month, Congress(I) MLA's did not heckle or interrupt when Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Rajasthan Assembly, reeled off charge after charge against the state Government in a 110-minute harangue. He quoted extensively from the Government's own files, accusing it of favouring influential contractors, shielding corrupt officials and taking decisions which had caused severe losses to the state exchequer. He also accused Rajasthan Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur of using his position to promote the interests of his relatives. Alleged Shekhawat: "I have yet to see such a corrupt government in my political career. Every department stinks of scandal. The chief minister himself is involved in many controversial decisions."

The opposition leader was not the only one on the attack: the dissidents in the Congress(I)—whose number had swollen to 90 last fortnight, out of the party strength of 143 in the 200-member Assembly—made plain their displeasure by staying away from the house when Mathur was replying to Shekhawat's charges. Later, they wrote them out as a memorandum to Mrs Gandhi. Earlier, they had stampeded the party high command into despatching All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai to Jaipur. A legislators' meeting at Khasa Kothi, the Tourism Department's hotel, degenerated into bedlam, and Bajpai had to talk to each MLA individually. The message she got was clear: Mathur must go.

Numerous Charges: With the pincers closing in on the harassed chief minister, who was boosted to the chair vacated equally harassed Jagannath Pahadia 1981, Rajasthan politics was fast c the boil. And the prime ingredients cooking pot were the acts of commiss omission which both opposition a dent leaders were hammering home. tant among them:

- ▶ the loss of over Rs 5 crore in the for the installation of 31,000 hand-p various districts of Rajasthan;
- ▶ the sale of over 7,000 bus tyres Rajasthan State Road Transport C tion at the scrap rate of Rs 40 per ty state's anti-corruption department is gating the sale, in which the state G ment is alleged to have lost Rs 28
- ▶ a Rs 80 lakh tax scandal in which officials of the state's Commercial T partment are involved. Rajasthan C ioner of Commercial Taxes V.N. B

The Finance Department estimates that the cost of a pump worked out to Rs 13,000, which is far more than the Rs 5,000 quoted when a private person wants one installed, more so when the contractors were given cement and steel at controlled rates by the Government.

Opposition leader Shekhawat (left) and Chief Minister Mathur: a welter of charges officials, including ghvi, deputy com- er of commercial guilty of "bungling" collection of tax on the of jeera to Gujarat r. The probe revealed e transporters were volved;

waiver of over Rs 1 penalty due (inclu- charges and other from unauthorised contractors in Bhil- strict;

soft-pedalling on rry Commission's which had charged ior Congress(I) lea- d powerful bureaucrats of grabbing and outside Jaipur; and

recovery of contraband electronic m a shop run by the chief minister's aipur (*see box*).

he hand-pump scheme is perhaps the headache for the Mathur Government. In September 1980, the state Government decided that over 30,000 pumps would be installed in more than 9,700 villages at an approximate cost of Rs 40 crore by 1984. Private contractors would instal 17,400 of these. By March 1, 1983, over Rs 43 crore had been spent on over 31,000 pumps installed in 7,794 villages—as against the target of 30,000 set for March 31, 1984. Last fortnight, however, the state Government cancelled all hand-pump contracts, finally bowing to increasingly vehement criticism that the programme was wasteful because most pumps were not working.

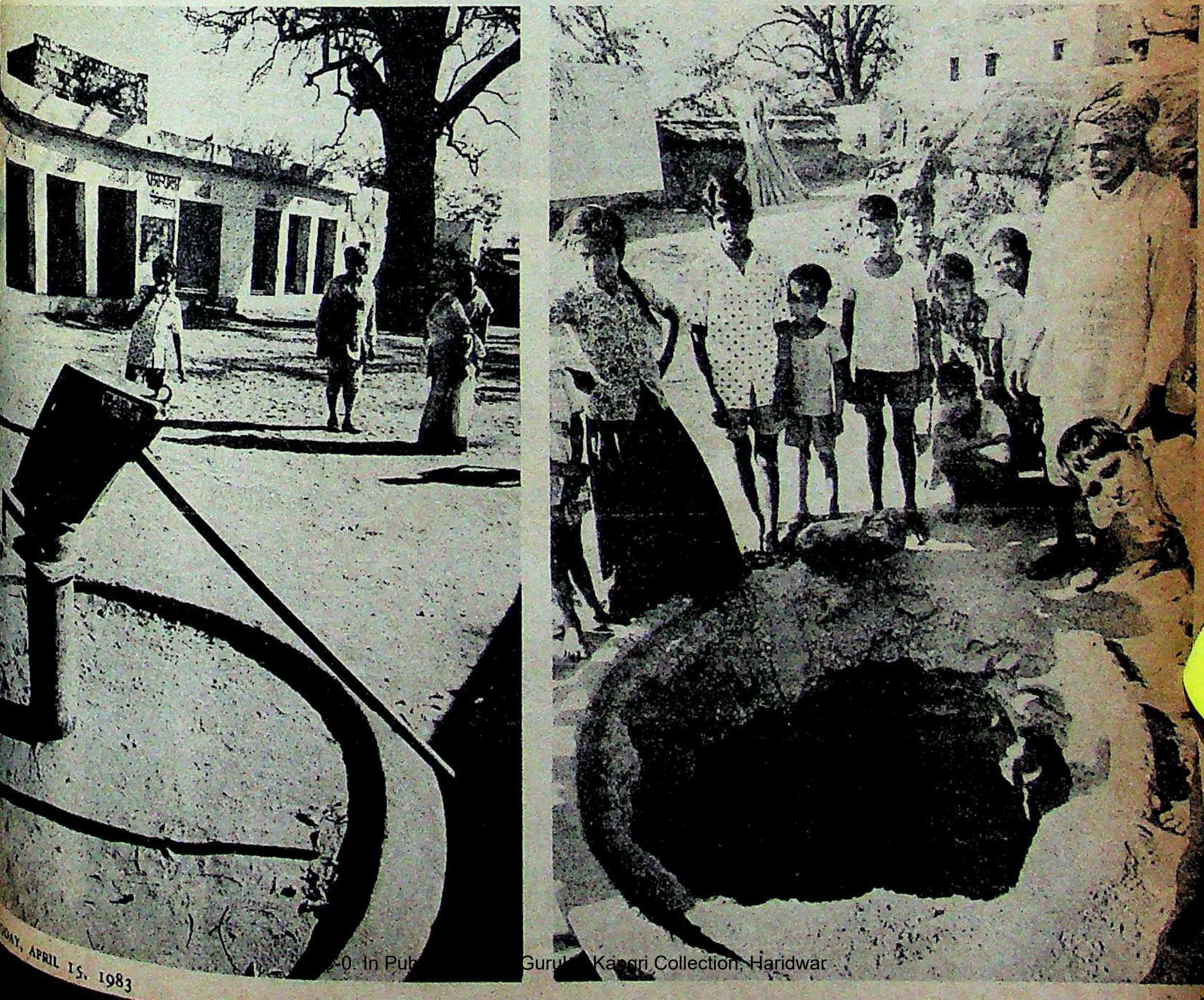
Wali: blaming "poor maintenance"

Contract Cancelled: Yatendra Singh, secretary, Public Health & Engineering (PH&E) Department summed up the scheme in his order dated March 11, 1983 addressed to one contractor: "Whereas (sic) the work of the rate contractor in respect of its progress as well as the quality of work has been found to be unsatisfactory, and whereas the said rate contractor through the connivance of others including Government officials/officers has procured by fraudulent means the so called compromise agreement dated 1st/2nd February 1983 or thereabout, the terms of which are unilaterally and unduly beneficial and advantageous to the rate contractor only . . . the Government of Rajasthan having considered fully has decided to terminate the agreement . . . ." The first victims of the hand-pump contract were G.P. Nagar, deputy secretary, PH&E, and five other junior officials: all were suspended.

But the damage had been done. It is estimated that 60 per cent of the pumps are not functioning at all. However, state Chief Secretary M.M.K. Wali maintains: "We have found that over 33 per cent of the hand-pumps are not functioning properly. But this is because of poor maintenance." The more likely explanation is that the contractors didn't dig deep enough.

Even while work was in progress, the

n-operational hand-pump in Govindpura village (left) and another hand-pump the villagers dug up only to find there was no pipe



complaints of faults started pouring in. In September 1982, three senior Rajasthan Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Board (RWSSDB) officials submitted a report that mentioned specific instances of substandard work. Over 50 sarpanches sent representations to the state Government; said Nand Lal Yadav, sarpanch, Hatod village, 25 km from Jaipur: "The pumps never worked properly in village Govindpura. If they had given the same amount of money to the village panchayat, we would have provided the villages with a permanent source of water."

Agreement: The rural water supply dream seemed quite rosy when six senior officials and representatives of private contractors sat down with the chairman, RWSSDB to thrash out an agreement. The terms ranged from Rs 150 per metre bored in sandy soil to Rs 250 per metre in rocky areas; the Government would supply the pump. The Finance Department estimates that the average cost of a pump worked out to Rs 1
which is far more than the Rs 5,00
quoted when a private person wa
installed, more so when the contract
given cement and steel at controlled r
the Government.

The 12 contractors selected in
four from Bhilwara—Kaluram Ra
& Sons, General Agencies & Supplie
Traders and General Agencies, and M
wada Boring Company. All of them

PRADEEP MATHUR

A Family Affair

POLITICS in India is often a family affair. So, unfortunately, is political scandal. In Rajasthan opposition leaders and Congress(I) dissidents have found plenty of targets in Chief Minister Mathur's family: his son Pradeep Mathur has been charged with selling smuggled goods; Mathur's wife and brother-in-law are involved in questionable land deals, and his brother and Pradeep are involved in a cooperative housing society muddle.

Last month, Pradeep Mathur became the talk of the Pink City within nine months of buying a share in an electronic goods shop, K.D. Electronics Ltd, on Jaipur's fashionable Mirza Ismail Road. He and three other partners were served notice by the assistant collector, Central Excise and Customs, for allegedly selling smuggled goods in the shop. The notice, in fact, was rather late in coming: nearly five months after customs officers raided the shop on October 23, 1982, and seized electronic items worth over Rs 16,000 ranging from cassettes to two-in-ones. Two of Pradeep's partners, Anil and Pommy Kashap, own Radiant Electronics, another similar shop in Jaipur, which was also raided; the contraband seized here was worth Rs 1,800.

The notice is dated March 5, 1983 and says: "There was sufficient reason to believe that the recovered electronic goods made in foreign countries have been smuggled into India in violation of the Customs Act.... They are required to show cause to the undersigned as to why the seized contraband electronic goods mentioned above should not be confiscated under 11 (d) of the Customs Act, 1962, and why penal action should not be initiated against them."

Explanation: Admitted Pradeep Mathur: "Our premises were raided by customs and we have received notice only five days ago. We will reply to it within 30 days. But there is nothing illegal about the goods. All of them belong to our customers, and my partner who was here during the raid could not give a proper explanation to the customs authorities." The delay in starting the investigation was reportedly due to political pressure. However, Mehtab Singh Kanwal, collector, customs, retorts: "There is no pressure on me. The law will take its course."

What caused a furore in the Assembly was that Pradeep Mathur's three other partners were the kin of senior government engineers. Anil and Pommy Kashap are the son and daughter-in-law of Satya Paul Kashap, chief engineer, Rajasthan Canal Project; the third partner, Ranjit Singh Duggal, is the son of Manjit Singh Duggal, superintending engineer, irrigation, Hanumangarh.

The partnership deed was signed in July 1982. The Kashaps and Duggal had opened the shop in January that year, but agreed to surrender 40 per cent of the shop—total investment: Rs 2 lakh—to the chief minister's son for Rs 60,00
Curiously, Duggal's Rs 1 lakh gets hi
only 30 per cent; Anil and Pommy hav
invested Rs 50,000 and control 15 pe
cent each. Besides, Pradeep, Anil an
Manjit each receive a monthly salary o
Rs 1,000.

Pradeep Mathur flanked by partners Sunil Kashap (left) and Anil Kashap: in the limeligh

Profitable Deal: The partners pay R
530 a month as rent for the 600 sq ft sho
according to Kashap, and did not pa
any 'goodwill' money to the previous oc
cupant. However, according to oth
shopkeepers in the area, the going rate fo
'goodwill' is between Rs 5 lakh and Rs
lakh. Pradeep maintains that he is com
mitted to investing more money in th
shop. And the partnership deed says th
K.D. Electronics will expand to "oth
places and in other names" in the state a
the partners decide. The K.D. Electroni
connection attracted public criticism b
cause Pradeep's partners were doing b
ness in electronics elsewhere, dealing w
government agencies.

Pradeep is no stranger to the Opp
tion. Over a decade ago, on Novemb
16, 1971, independent MLA Man

ment on March 12, 1981, for the tion of hand-pumps in 10 districts: er, Chittorgarh, Bhilwara, Tonk, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Banswara, r and Pali.

ously, the Bhilwara contractors 80 per cent of their pumps after who hails from Bhilwara, came to Between September 1980, when work and July 1981, they had installed ,300 pumps; in the next 18 months, until March 1983, they substantially increased their volume by installing 4,800 pumps. In all, they installed Rs 11 crore worth of pumps. All 12 contractors together installed over 18,000 of the 31,000 pumps, at an estimated cost of Rs 25 crore.

However, the Bhilwara contractors were not satisfied with the amount of work they had done. In October 1982, they asked the Government to extend their contract beyond September 1983—the original contract was for three years, from September 1980 to September 1983—for two years up to 1985. Their plea was that their installed capacity was much more than the work allotted to them, and they had not been able to complete some installations because of the monsoon. When the Government did not take any action on their request, because of the complaints, they moved the Ajmer district court.

The PH&E Department worked out a

THE NEW INDIA ASSURANCE CO. LTD.
AGENCIES
K.D. ELECTRONICS
THE MUSIC SHOP
VIDEOS-COLOUR T.V.
New MOTI STORES
GENERAL & PROVISION MERCHANTS
GENERAL P

Mathur's K.D. Electronics and (below) Customs Collector Kanwal: delayed action

gh Mehta had alleged in the Assembly at Pradeep had procured a Siemens gency for power generation sets in Rajasthan: his father was then state electricity minister. The agency was surrendered two years later because of heavy losses. However, under the Rajasthan Industrial Development Corporation's scheme for unemployed engineers, Pradeep started a cycle tube manufacturing unit in the state capital's industrial estate.

Business Furore: The unit came under attack on November 16, 1971, when Mehta accused Mathur, who was then electricity minister, of promoting his son's business interests. Pradeep had appointed Aukad and Company his unit's agents, to boost its sales. Mehta alleged that Aukad, which was the electricity board's approved contractor was being shown favours in the placing of orders. Mathur admitted that Aukad was his son's agent in the state; he added, however: "If the Electricity Department is buying some goods from them, it is department's internal matter and I have

nothing to do with it. All the allegations are baseless."

Later, Pradeep's industrial enterprise suffered heavy losses—at a time when most units run by unemployed engineering graduates were doing good business—and was ultimately taken over by the state Government in 1976. But the same year, Pradeep got a high-speed diesel distribution agency on the national highway and managed this successfully with a partner until July 1982. Then came K.D. Electronics—and more headaches for a patient father.

Another embarrassing transaction for the Mathur family is the sale of land in Udaipur owned by Shree Mahila Ashram, Bhilwara—an educational organisation run by the chief minister's wife and brother-in-law. The land was sold for Rs 47,804 in April 1981 to the Diocesan Corporation, a Christian organisation. But according to the law the land could not be resold; it should have been returned to the Government. Yet the sale deed dated April 21, 1981, says that "it had become absolutely necessary to sell the land for the repayment of debts". When the issue was raised in the Assembly, the Government denied any knowledge of the deal.

Land Trouble: Mathur also found himself in the dock over 300 acres of land in Jaipur, in which his son Pradeep, brother B.S. Mathur and other relatives have an interest, as they are members of the New Pink City Housing Cooperative Society, which has sold the land to people with powerful connections: one of them is Harideo Joshi, former chief minister of the state.

The sale flew in the teeth of a notification issued by the Janata government on October 8, 1979, acquiring the land for the state housing board. In fact, the land acquisition officer filed his report on the land in 1980 after vetting the formal objections: it said that the Government should go ahead and acquire the land. Despite repeated reminders from the state Housing Department nothing has been done.

Mathur, however, denies that his family or his government is involved in anything that could remotely be interpreted as shady. He told INDIA TODAY: "People don't spare even Mrs Gandhi. I am a small person. This is nothing but character assassination. In fact I am surviving in politics because of my clean image."

compromise formula under which these four contractors, and these four only, would continue installing pumps at the September 1980 rates—which compare unfavourably with the rates at which hand-pump jobs were allotted in Bikaner last month: between Rs 100 and Rs 150 per metre. The fall in rates is due to increased competition. The compromise was cleared by the Law Department, but the PH&E secretary and the RWSSDB chief engineer were not informed.

BY THIS time opposition leaders were up in arms. Yatendra Singh wrote a confidential note to Chief Secretary Wali dated February 17, 1983, where he said: "Allegations were also made in a recent meeting of MLA's that the firms concerned (actually all four firms belong to the same person in some form or the other i.e. Shri Jhanwar of Bhilwara) bribed the officials/officers for getting such a compromise letter issued. This eventuality cannot be ruled out particularly considering the manner in which the file has been dealt with." On February 24, Singh recorded: "It was clear from perusal of the notings that the same has been done with ulterior motives and for consideration."

On Singh's recommendation the state Government suspended Nagar and two officials and called in the crime branch. But, as a senior government official points out: "No junior person will recommend an action involving Rs 10 crore unless he has been directed to do so. Moreover no action has been taken against the Law Department officials who cleared the compromise." In fact, G.K. Sharma, secretary, Law Department, who approved the extension of the contract at the old rates was, in his turn, given extension when he reached the age of retirement in January this year. Mathur, incidentally, is in charge of the Home and General Administration Department which processes disciplinary measures.

Mathur was held responsible for the fiasco, even though it had its birth in the life of the previous ministry, because the private contractors did most of their work during his tenure. In addition, his government did not move fast enough on complaints. And no other contractor was allowed to work in the districts where the four Bhilwara contractors were operating.

Mining Scandal: The hand-pump scandal apart, the waiver of penalty on illegal mining in Bhilwara district has also developed into a scandal of respectable proportions. Opposition leaders say that the exchequer lost Rs 1.10 crore through this waiver; Mathur admitted that the Mines Department had waived the duty in some cases, but added that this came to less than Rs 10 lakh. The case shot into prominence when BJP MLA Nathu Singh asked for and received a list of 427 cases of unauthorised mining and the penalty due in each case, in the Bijolia and Begun areas of Rajasthan. A fair number were people claiming to be close to the chief minister.

On April 10, 1981 Pahadia had ordered that all unauthorised mining cases before that date should be regularised. However, the Mathur Government waived Rs 12 lakh in penalty due from 75 people who had continued with unauthorised mining after April 30, 1981. In fact, the recovery of Rs 60 lakh from nine leading mine contractors from Bhilwara district was stopped in November 1982. The Bhilwara district collector had issued notices in October 1982 to contractors for the payment of Rs 80 lakh as "surface rent"; even after six months, no action has been taken.

Jagannath Pahadia (left) and Harideo Joshi: dissident attack

Other members of the Mathur Ministry have also felt the lash of scandal. On March 16, 1983, BJP MLA Kailash Meghwal caused a sensation in the Assembly when he disclosed that Mines Minister Jai Kishan Sharma's relatives were being patronised by the Mines Department. Sharma admitted in the Assembly that his daughter Madhu Sharma had been allotted a "150 × 150 square metre" plot for mining purposes, he added that his daughter had joined his two sons already in the business. Asks Meghwal: "Is it proper for Mathur to appoint as mines minister someone whose sons and daughters are in the same business? The possibility of power being misused cannot be ruled out."

Wood Fiddle: Yet another scandal concerns wood. Early last year, the Fisheries Department awarded a contract to Gulab Abbas for removing stumps fro around Rana Pratap Sagar. Howev were soon complaints that trees in stumps were being cut and sold: on gation, the Forest Department ma recover timber and charcoal left be burning part of the timber; the co was let off with a fine. Later, the di lector stayed the contract; the stay w drawn after four weeks. Wood wo Rs 1.20 crore was involved. Rajas nister of State for Forests Govind S closed that the Government had su both the additional chief conservator rests and the Fisheries Departmen who had awarded Abbas the contra

Besides specific instances of mal stration, opposition and Congress(I) also charge that the Government is dr its feet on corruption. The Ram Dev mission report on the Rajasthan Ca ject accused over 200 e of taking bribes and w mitted in September 19 was referred to the anti- tion department and se have got stuck there. Acc to Home Ministry sour department has not beyond the preliminary of investigating over 1 ruption cases, involving 500 officials, in the l months.

Weak Chief: Most Congress(I) MLA's accus thur of being a weak ad trator. Says one: "Wh that the Congress(I) ru state? The bureaucracy the decisions; Mathur signs on the dotted line." Adds Ra Shyam, Congress(I) MLA from Gan "Mathur is surrounded by bad a Even orders of senior ministers are n plemented by the officials."

The chief minister now finds two chief ministers ranged against him: P and Harideo Joshi, who lead two g the legislature party. Another threat from the 40-odd MLA's appointed ch of state government set-ups by Pahadia with liberal perks at their dispos added to the 'Mathur must go' cam

Mathur is hanging on at present because the legislature party is divide successor. He could have struck back tormentors in the party, but the charges against his government have taken the wind out of his sails. wat sums up the situation: "No o Mathur. It is the Central leadershi backing him to the hilt, becaus likely to challenge the powers tha Delhi."

—PRABHU CHAWL

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ABHU CHAWLA

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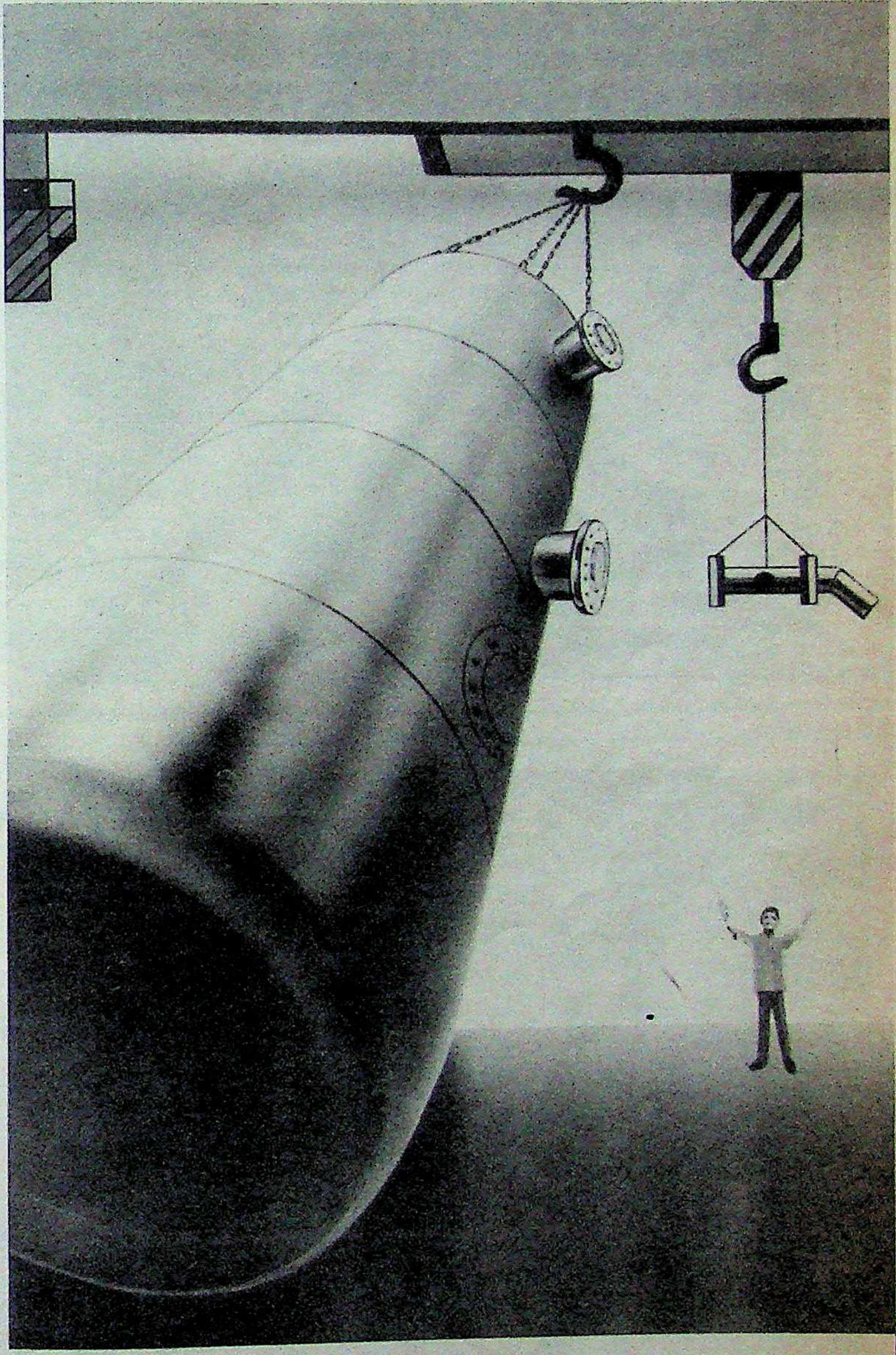

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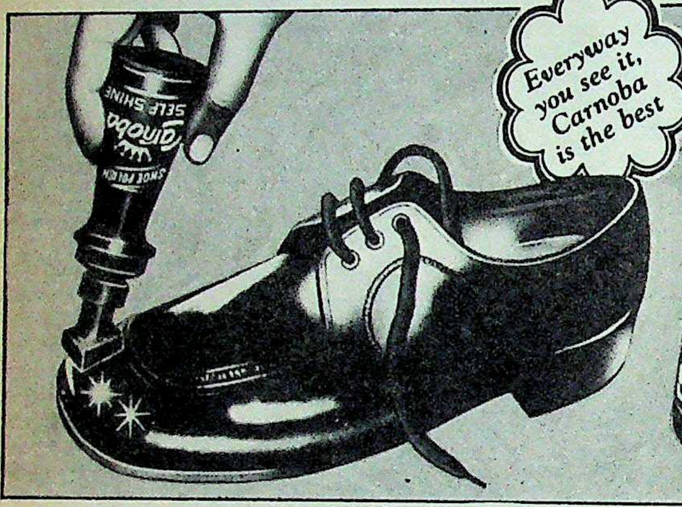

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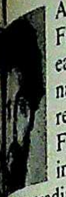
An Indian Summer



AFTER stimulating London's connoisseurs of art, a Festival of India is now to be mounted in Paris in early 1985. The attempt forms part of a well-coordinated campaign to ginger up the Indian image and reflects, to an extent, the broadening scope of Indo-French ties. There is a perceptibly deepening interest in Indian affairs in France, this country having shed of its traditional insular infatuation with Francophone mat- ut the average Frenchman's comprehension of 'Indian culture' een somewhat flawed, partly due to a lack of exposure. In Paris, ation' has often been limited to a desultory release of a Ray a performance of a dance troupe of questionable value. With ed French interest and multiplying 'Indian events', this on may be gradually changing.

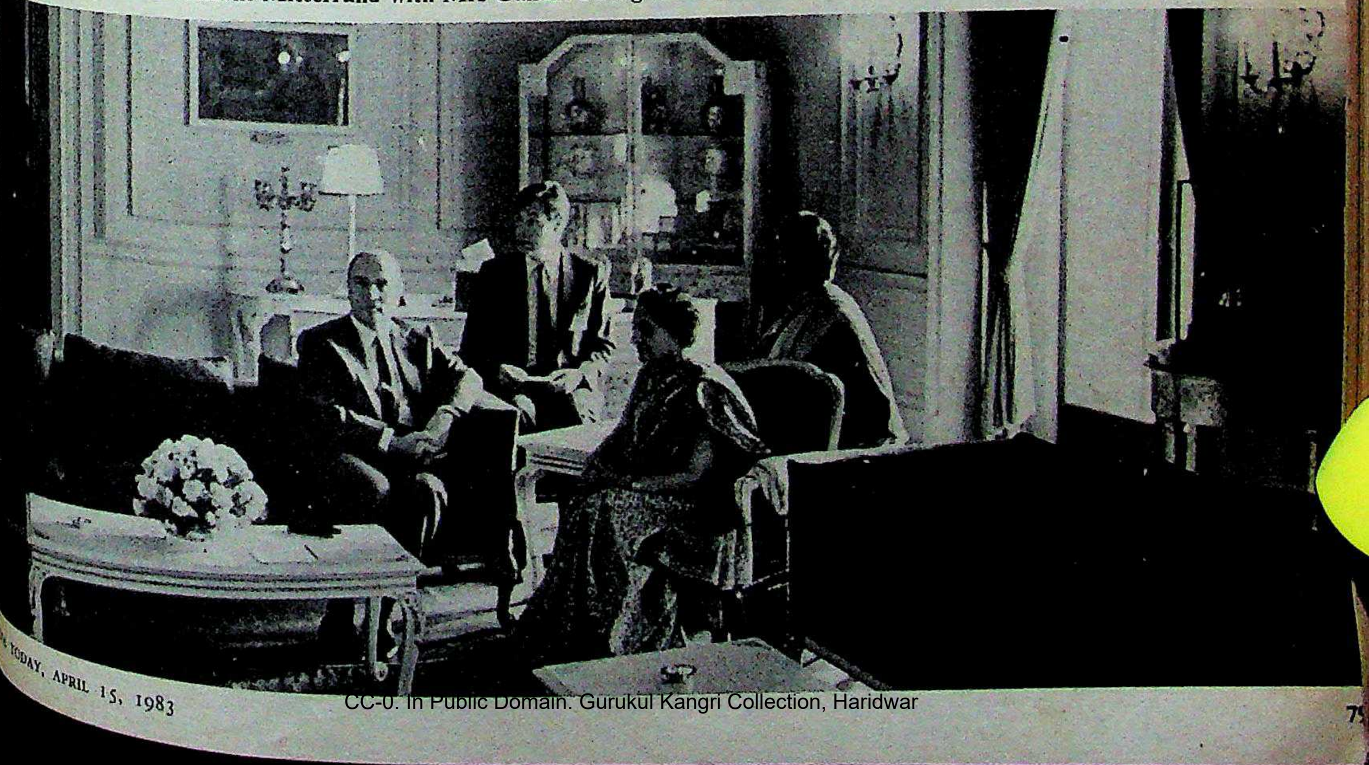
On the political level, with the advent of the Socialist Govern- nd reinforced ties with India, there is swiftly expanding cove- n the French media—be it a sunny despatch on the clinching of phone deal or bemoaning delays over the signing of a Mirage ct. The amplified coverage and interest has not always meant maginative reportage. For instance, a large press entourage ng television crews had accompanied President Mitterrand to last November; TV viewers here were treated to tranquilising of phlegmatic rhinos grazing in Kaziranga or gnarled Brah- aking a morning dip in the Ganges. An exasperated French er complained: "We have been seeing these holy cows for deca- Why can't they show us something new? Is this all India is t?" On the other extreme, *Le Canard Enchaine*, France's most tic satirical weekly devoted an entire issue spoofing the French ent's Indian visit, outlining how the French-supplied uranium ould "ameliorate" the quality of fires lit in Bengal while the sale rage-2000 with its 'stupefying speed' would greatly 'enhance air ortation' in the subcontinent.

n recent weeks, however, articles in the print media were not so hearted. The outrage in Assam has been front-paged for days across the political spectrum—from the left-wing *Liberation* to nservative *Le Figaro*, from magazines like *L'Express* to the *Le Nouvel Observateur*, many of whom wondered at the endemic, often insensate violence in "contemporary Indian society". As the horrific death toll mounted, editorial columns grew progressively scathing. One of them, rounding up a catalogue of bloody and appalling holocausts in the country since Partition that covered political, caste and communal blood-letting or plain banditry, concluded: "... behind a seductive philosophy, a political system whose pomp it (India) has guarded, bloodshed is still for many Indians the only means of opposing an adversary".

Ambitious Festival: The string of India-related events now being planned for Paris will perhaps constitute a change in tenor from the cold, unforgiving prose. As a run-up to the '85 festival, an ambitious Indian Film festival—interpreted here by Indian Embassy officials as the biggest ever held in France—or perhaps even in the continent—is scheduled to begin at the end of this month. The film festival, intended to last three months, will screen 90 selected films and 20 documentaries. The venue is well chosen: the popular Georges Pompidou Centre. This $100 million six-year-old experiment, which each day draws massive throngs of gawking tourists to its purposefully outrageous architecture, has gained fame throughout the world as much for its unstoppable controversies as for its brilliant exhibitions. The Pompidou Centre, known to Parisiens as the 'Beaubourg', is now slotted alongside other traditional tourist attractions.

The Indian film festival, now being competently put together by the embassy's cultural section, is scheduled at the Pompidou Centre's Cinematheque and it ought to be a big draw. France is going through a movie boom and Paris is seen as the film capital of Europe. While theatre revenues have dwindled dramatically in the past two decades by as much as 70 per cent in Britain, West Germany and Italy, in the last two years there has been a stunning increase of 41 per cent in box-office receipts in France, and this year, according to French trade officials, it will total more than $600 million. French fans are among the most cosmopolitan in the world who not only tolerate subtitles and dubbings but will also discuss the merits of an esoteric Egyptian film with as much vigour as a new film of Gallic superstar Gerard Depardieu. A Ray film, *Jalsaghar*, under

President Mitterrand with Mrs Gandhi during his visit to New Delhi: renewed interest



the local title, *Le Salon de Musique* drew large appreciative audiences last year. The Pompidou Centre intends to spend a large part of its 1983 film budget on the Indian film festival although overall costs are evenly split with the Indian Government.

THE INDIAN Film Festival is of a different genre and it will include five major retrospectives dedicated to Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak, Shyam Benegal and G. Aravindan, each of which will feature some of their finest films. The rest of the festival is to be segmented into 'panorama of India', 'historical films', 'new Indian cinema section' and 'popular Hindi cinema'. The panorama section includes such ancient classics as *Light of Asia*, *Diamond Queen* and *Chandralekha*, while the new Indian cinema section includes *Chomana Dudi*, *Garam Hawa*, *Ghattashraddha*, *Samskara*, *Aakrosh*, *Sara Akash*, *Oppol*, *36 Chowringhee Lane*, *Thaneer Thaneer* and *Elipathayam*. The popular section includes, among others, *Awaara*, *Pakeezah*, *Sholay*, *Amar Akbar Anthony* and *Ganga Jumna*. The 20-film documentary segment is further divided into performing arts, paintings, archaeology, biographies and a general section. Alongside the film festival, an exhibition depicting the history of Indian cinema organised with the help of the Pune archives will open at the Pompidou Centre and a compendium in French of the same title will be formally released.

The 1985 festival will feature at least three major exhibitions apart from several others. Besides the contemporary Indian art exhibition at the Pompidou, there is to be a classical arts exhibition at the spectacular Grand Palais and a textile exhibition at the Musée de l'art Decoratif—venues which have already been booked owing to the intense demand for space. Coinciding with this will be a north Indian dance and music festival which will be part of the popular Paris Autumn Festival. Scores of smaller Indian exhibitions are in the planning stage.

. HHEC's showroom in Paris: high-pressure selling

Whilst these events are being organised "officially", on a different level other Paris-based Indian organisations have also been doing some forthright work. Recently in some 200 subway stations of the Paris metro, used by 4 million passengers every day, a flaming red and yellow poster promised alluring Indian prizes. The posters provided a striking contrast in subway stations such as Varenne where a replica of Rodin's 'Le Penseur' broods and in the Louvre, where a plaster Venus de Milo glacially regards passengers. Organised by Air-India and the Indian Tourism Office in Paris, along with the big supermarket Bon Marche, customers to the store who won prizes in a special sale were being offered trips to India.

Publicity: The selling of India is not always an easy task, especially for those shackled by a meagre publicity budget, and this is particularly true for the high-profile and competitive airlines industry. But Air-India's Paris office has kept pace with the others. The cost-conscious Gidwaney, who runs a tautly-structured office having reduced his staff and closed unnecessary airport offices, says: "Working from abroad, we have to try doubly hard—selling the Indian image and attracting new customers to fly our airline. Being professionals, we have succeeded in doing well and I am confident we will continue to do well." Adds Assistant Manager Lt-Col. Y.R. Ratra: "That we are on the right track is reflected by our improving revenues. But the revised price structure, which we have camp for and which will take effect from next month, will benefit ther." This view is echoed by Bernard Iserentant, sales manag a French national who has worked with Air-India for 23 yea feels the revised price structure will make the traveller who op the dubious charms of Bangkok rethink. Says Iserentant: "I seen that a Frenchman who goes to India once invariably goes at least one more time, if not more. The trick is to get him there first time."

The carrier has cast its net wide to woo not only the low-fare vellers but also executives, businessmen and industrialists of pr gious French institutions. It has in recent months flown grou executives from Phillips, Elf-Renault and the renowned fa house Lancome. Next on the agenda is a group from the highly clusive Maxim's Business Club. The release of the film *Gandhi* fortnight has provided more opportunities. Air-India in tandem the Tourism Office joined hands with the popular Radio-Telev Luxembourg (RTL) offering prizes to winners of a quiz revol around the film in top-rated compere Patrick Sabatier's talk sh

Jag Mohan Malik, manager of the Tourism Office in Paris fe the Frenchman has a more "intellectual outlook" than the avera West European tourist. Rat than the stereotyped As Khajuraho-Kathmandu cir the Frenchman is more cur about monasteries in Lad and Zanskar, Hindu festivals Amarnath, fairs in Pushkar discovering little known a like Shekhawati (Rajasthan the kite-flying festival in Ah dabad. This section, Ma points out, is his stro clientele, but there are als veral "fringe segments".

Inventive Programmes: attract the latter, several inv ive schemes have been tho up. The front-rank TV Cha TF-1's popular progra *Les Animaux du Monde* (A mals of the World) recently fe tured a series on Indian wildlife and in association with RTL co ted a quiz for viewers and listeners to identify the animal sounds. T films linked Indian miniature paintings with the animals. The ne ries, sponsored by the India Tourism Development Corporation, concentrate on Mughal art.

If Indian cultural diversity is what the Tourism Office exp craftsmanship is what Sona—the Handicrafts and Handloom Ex Corporation's showpiece frontshop—accentuates. Sona-Paris superbly located—on the Rue St Honore—one of the city's tre streets chockful of celebrated fashion houses like Emmanuel U ro, Yves St Laurent, Pierre Cardin, Hermes and Sonia Rykiel. "B ding Indian craftsmanship with French know-how and experti what we have aimed at," says Vina Dalal, manager of Sona.

Among Sona's immediate plans are collaborations wi ding French journals like *Marie-Claire* to project khadi ens and with *Decoration Internationale* on quality home decor India. All three Indian organisations are working together to s sor a French team including leading fashion models to India the much acclaimed fashion magazine, *L'Officiel de la Coutur* *la Mode de Paris* who will present French clothes against I backdrops with Indian accessories. The symbiotic and ex link-ups are materialising on multiple fronts but there can be n mediate pronouncements on their ultimate success or failure.

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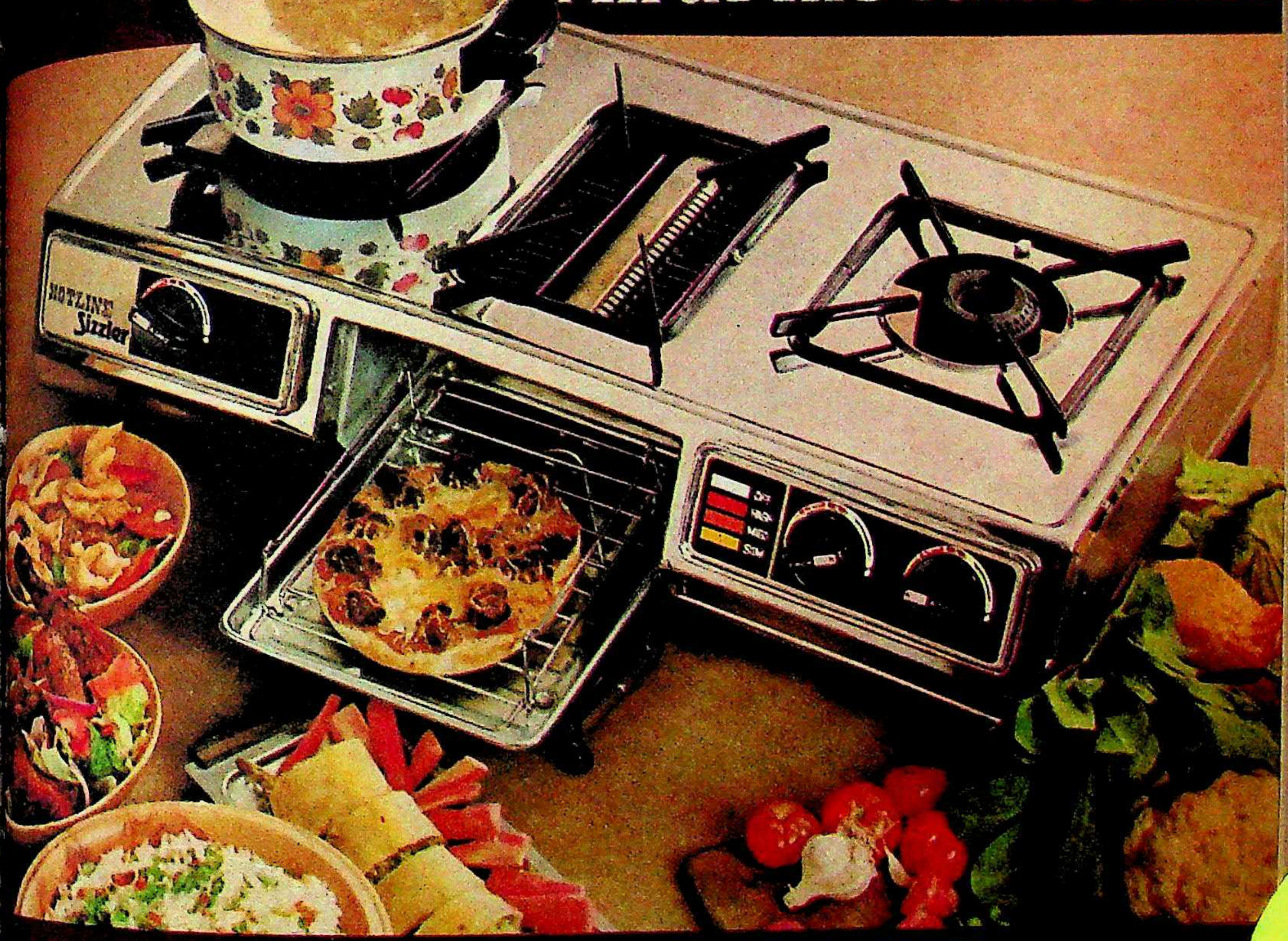

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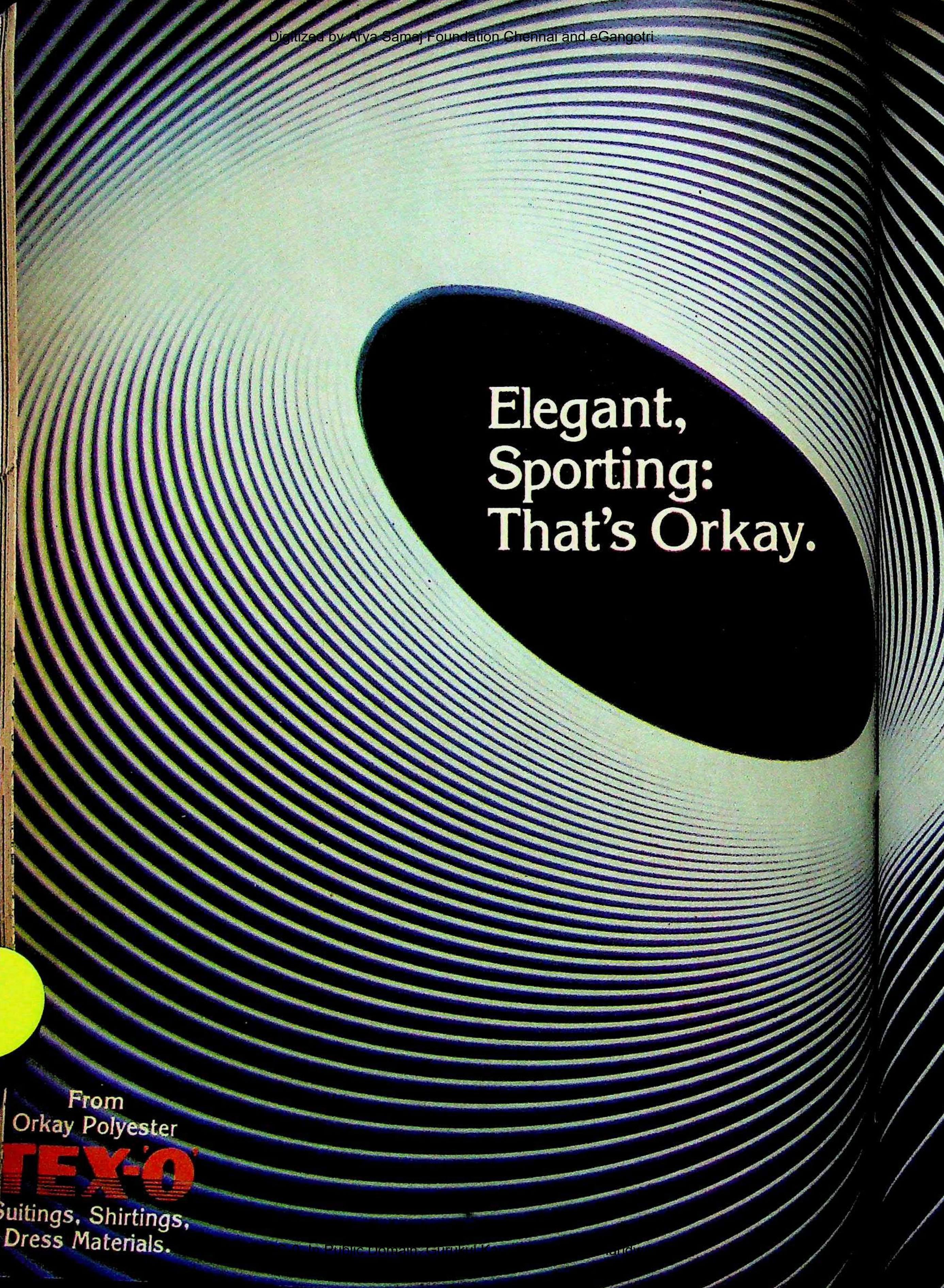
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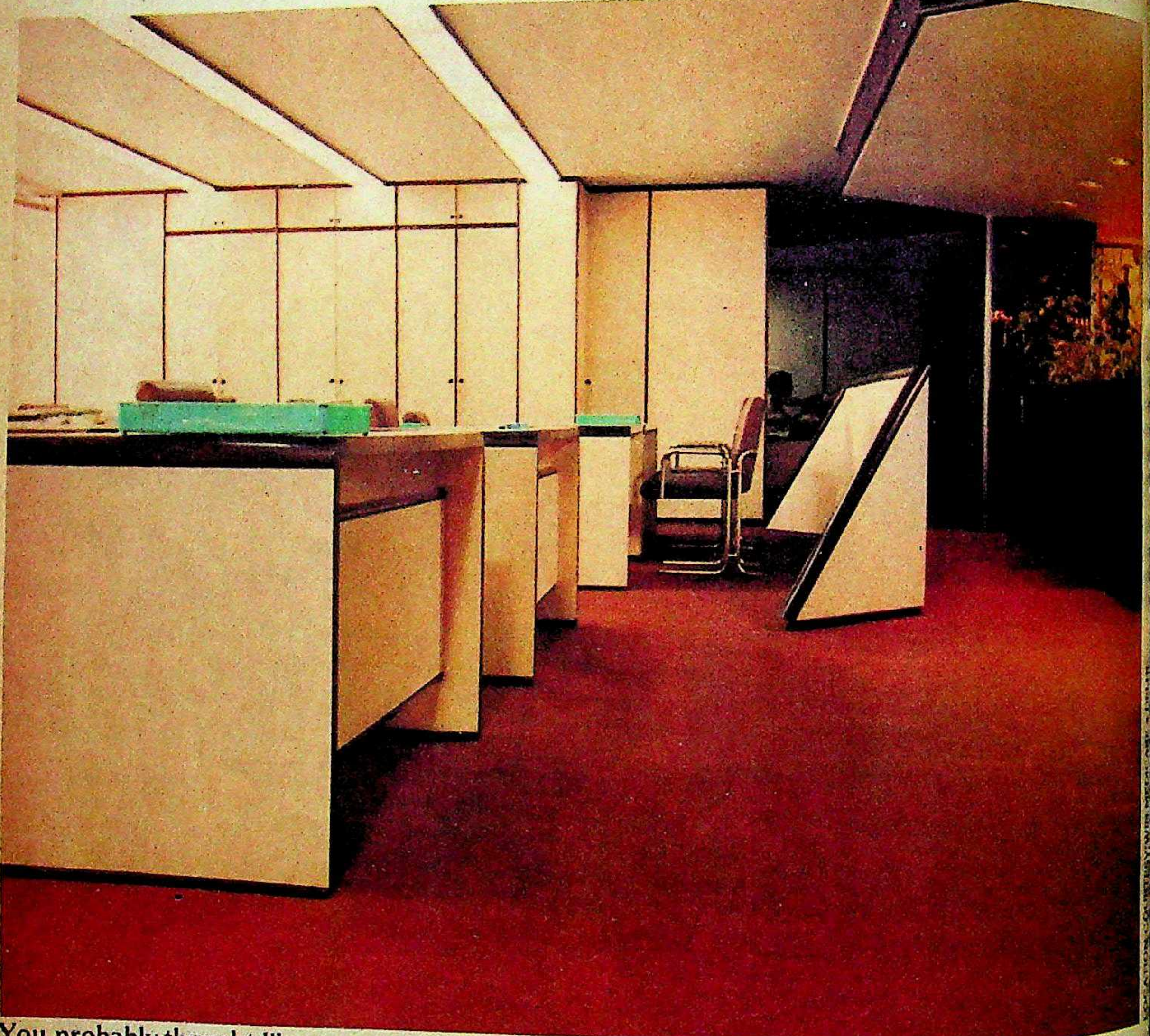

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PARADISE LOST

THE INDUSTRIAL boom in Sikkim might now lead to an industrial exodus. With excise laws as well as the Industries (Development and Regulations) Act being extended to the mountainous state, some of the units that were set up in Sikkim with the sole purpose of exploiting tax benefits have decided to close down and leave. One is Golden Tobacco, which routed close to a fourth of its total cigarette production through Sikkim. Godfrey Phillips is weighing its options, as are some of the cosmetics companies that had set up shop there.

Those still in two minds about whether to stay on or leave are waiting in the hope that the Government will announce a graded excise tariff specially for Sikkim. An attraction that still exists in the state is the non-applicability of income tax laws, but this is not much of an incentive for companies with headquarters in other states, since they will be taxed anyway. The only units that are certain to stay on are the public sector HMT (Hindustan Machine Tools) and the state Government-owned canning unit. Among the cigarette companies, ITC too has decided against pulling out.

DIRECTION

HE NEW year's import policy, scheduled to be announced in early April, is likely to reverse at least partly the liberalised drive of recent years. The much criticised open general licence is expected to be restricted to a list of specified items, and new are likely to be imposed on the import of a number of diate goods. Exporters, however, are likely to be given open- treatment in the hope that they will be able to earn additional exchange.

his new direction is expected to consolidate the moves already limit the import of bulk items like steel and fertiliser, all of had been coming in freely till some months ago. The general in the Government is that these correctives are necessary to e liberalisations that had gone too far.

LUATION DECISION

AS THE Government decided to implement a gradual devaluation of the rupee? Officials deny any such move, but the exchange rate changes of recent months indicate that the losing ground against virtually every currency other than the pound. This is also reflected in the statistics put out by the ional Monetary Fund (IMF) for the six months till January- hile virtually every major currency in the world has streng- in recent months against the IMF's special drawing right —which are equivalent to a global reserve currency—the as lost in value by about 2 per cent.

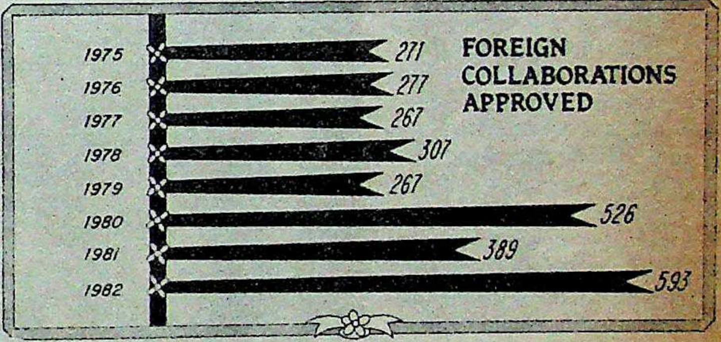
e rupee in fact gained till October, but has dropped by 4 per ce then. In contrast, the US dollar, the Japanese yen, the mark and the French franc, as well as a variety of other es (like those of Austria, Australia, Belgium, Italy and k) have gained against the SDR, while very few have fallen. ctive devaluation could therefore be close to 10 per cent.

STING IN CHINA

WO INDIAN businesss houses are moving into China: the Birlas to manufacture an unlikely item, bath-towels, and the Delhi-based Punj group to produce enamel paints. These got ahead after a Chinese delegation visited India for talks last t. There is, however, evidence of an overall decline in the of new Indian joint ventures abroad, partly because of easier nt avenues at home. Also, Malaysia, a favourite location is now less attractive because it refuses to give protection to c units despite strong competition from imports.

COLLABORATION CRAZE

LAST year saw a record number of foreign collaborations being approved by the Government: at 593, a more than 50 per cent increase over the 389 approved in 1981. But the number was only 13 per cent more than the previous record of 526 in 1980. More significantly, these collaborations brought in a record quantum of fresh foreign capital: Rs 62.8 crore. Though a relatively small sum, this is more than the total capital brought in during the previous nine years put together. A substantial chunk of the foreign capital inflow in 1982 was accounted for by Suzuki Motor Company's investment of Rs 25.1 crore in Maruti Udyog's share capital.



CONCRETE PLANS

HINDUSTAN Lever has decided to move into cement, reviving an old proposal first made six years ago but subsequently dropped. The company is also finalising plans to set up a second di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) plant and has already got the Government's clearance to go in for the large-scale manufacture of polyester-cotton shirts for the export market. The export unit is to be located in the Kandla free trade zone, and will mainly feed the West European market with a million shirts annually.

Other export projects are also planned in the continuing effort to maintain the company's export performance—essential under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) if the company is to continue with 51 per cent foreign shareholding. Lever's export thrust in other areas has, however, suffered a setback because of the lack of Soviet orders for detergents. Orders this year came late and account for no more than a couple of crores, against Rs 12 crore last year. A company team that visited Moscow in search of more business has come back empty-handed.

NEW ECONOMIC ORDER

The Grand Disillusion

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs has the classiest office in Delhi, second only perhaps to the prime minister's office only a couple of doors down in the South Block. The secretaries in the Foreign Ministry sit in near-regal splendour reminiscent of the Raj, complete with *khidmatgars* who produce Banarasi *paans* on silver trays. And the intercom buzzes with conversation straight out of Graham Greene:

"Montevideo to Buenos Aires? I wouldn't know. Ask Kalra."

"He's on holiday. His Jeeves is ill."

"Try Horseback."

"O.K."

'Horseback' must be a password, but one can't be sure. The foreign office boys are so smooth, they mesmerise you with words. And the words flow effortlessly from lips softened by countless *paans*—expressions like the 'new international economic order' and 'confrontation' and 'North-South divide'. Twenty-four hours after the glorious finale to the Non-aligned Summit, the words echo in the vaulted chambers of South Block as they clatter endlessly over the telex machines to the ends of the earth. One comes away slightly shaken but reassured that the war against poverty is about to be joined, as soon as reinforcements arrive from Argentina and Zimbabwe—perhaps, some of them on horseback?

Wishful Thinking: I have a feeling we are in for yet another grand disillusionment. Truth is always stranger than fiction, and the truth about poverty even more so. It is natural for the poor to think that they are what they are because the rich will not let them be anything else. The rich have too much money and too tight a grip over it to do much good to those who do not belong to their club. If only the rich would loosen their strings and let the poor help themselves to the booty, the world's troubles would be over.

Fads and fashions change; and the latest fad about development, as about poverty, is that development and international trade are closely linked and constraints on world trade ultimately affect development. The economic resolution of the New Delhi summit asking for global negotiations is in fact a plea for removing constraints on exports from the poor countries and for transfer of resources—that is, money—from the rich to the poor.

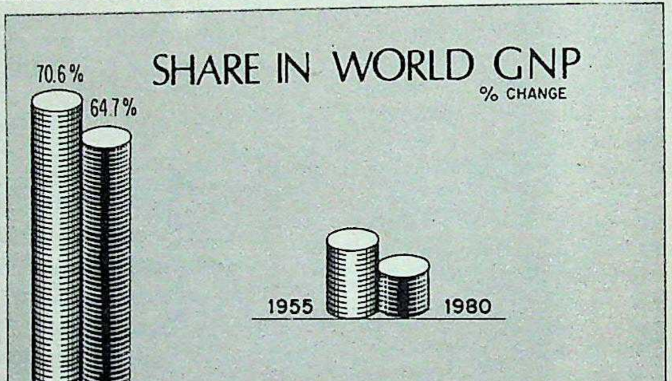
Such a transfer, it is argued, will help the poor countries increase their exports to the rich and will also lead to bigger capital flows into the economies of the South. It is not clear why this should be considered such a revolutionary departure from the earlier conventional approaches. Transfer of resources, whether of capital or technology, has always been a major plank in the demands of the poor, though there is not much evidence that it has in fact led to the kind of results expected from such a transfer.

Basic Facts: There are actually two questions: firstly, taking the world as a whole, are the rich countries getting richer and is the gap between the rich and th countries increasing? Secondly, taking vidual countries, are the rich getting and, if so, what are we doing about it?

First, take the North-South probl the world as a whole. International com sons should always be handled gingerly, some statistics are better than nothing. an idea of the way the pattern of incom stribution has changed over the years ca had from the figures published by the W Bank in its World Development R 1982. According to this re the share of the develo countries in world gross na nal product (GNP) went slightly from 20.7 per ce 1955 to 21.5 per cent in 19 period of 25 years, long en for an assessment of long- trends.

The share of the adva countries—called indu market economies—went d from 70.6 per cent to 64. cent, while that of the indu non-market economies— is, the communist bloc c tries—went up from 8.6 to per cent. If we lump the groups of industrial eco together, we find that combined share went d from 79.2 to 77.2 per cent. winners were actually the income oil exporters wh share went up 14 times, from per cent in 1955 to 1.4 per in 1980. In overall terms, current share is not very —only 1.4 per cent of the —but the jump is striking

It would appear from that the real sufferers were the developing countries share actually went up, bu industrial economies w share slumped, though not by a grea gin. But the term 'developing cou lumps together a large number of dis nations at varying levels of developme does not really reveal the real state of If we look closely enough, however, that the share of the low-income co which include China and India alo others, dropped from 8.1 to 4.8 per substantial fall—while the share of income countries which range all th from Kenya and South Korea to Sin



Charts by B.K. Sharma

It would appear from this that the real sufferers were not the developing countries whose share actually went up, but the industrial economies whose share slumped though not by a great margin.

from 13 to 17 per cent.

would appear therefore that it is this of middle-income countries that has in relation to others, and not the market economies of the so-called In fact, within the latter group, the States has suffered terribly, its share come down from 40.3 per cent in 1955 per cent in 1980, while that of Japan early quadrupled from 2.4 to 9.5 per

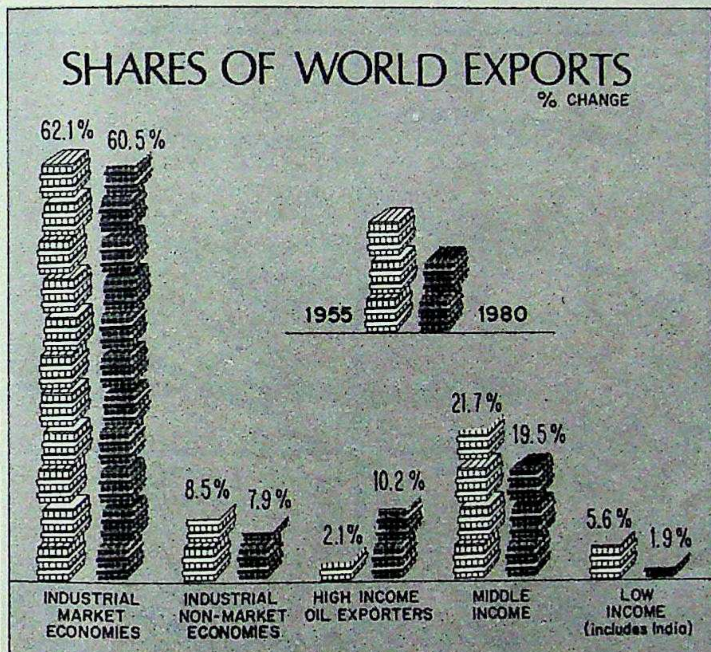
Significant Changes: If these figures are ide, not all the rich countries have richer nor have all the poor grown Some rich countries have grown ri- rticularly the oil countries, commu- countries and Japan, and some untries have grown poorer, especially and India, relatively that is. The share of which is mentioned fre- in the Non-aligned resolutions, is now the same as that of the bloc of the developing es, while 25 years ago it most double.

Let us see how this uphea- incomes has affected the of world trade. It logically have led to lar- disruption in trade but of the sort occurred. are of exports of develo- untries is down, of cour- so is the share of the unist bloc and the indus- market economies. Only exporters have improved sition, from 2 to 10 per

Within these categories, there are marked In the developing the share of low-income as middle-income is down, though in diffe- proportions. Among the market economies, of Europe as well as of has gone up but that of ited States is down, from 10.9 per cent. In India, is down from 1.4 to 0.4 per cent, the case of China, the fall is less ate, from 1.4 to 0.9 per cent. China's share is twice that of India, though ago, both were roughly at the same

O THESE figures mean anything at all? They do indicate that countries which are able to hold up their own production (as represented by GNP) able to hold up their own in exports. Europe, for instance, improved, albeit slightly on its GNP share and has been able to maintain its share of exports. So was the case with Japan and most middle-income countries. China and India fell far behind the rest in GNP and had to beat a retreat on the export front also. After all, you cannot export what you do not produce, though what and how much you produce may be influenced to some extent by what and how much you can export.

Countries that are so vociferous about the new international economic order (NIEO) might pay a little more attention to their own internal economic order. The assumption behind the NIEO is that a more equitable distribution of global incomes should help the poorer countries and stimulate growth all round. By the same token, a more equitable distribution of incomes within countries should help these countries move faster.



After all, you cannot export what you do not produce, though what and how much you produce may be influenced to some extent by what and how much you can export.

Take the case of India. With the major exception of West Bengal, states with high-income levels in 1960 have grown faster since then. They have also had higher levels of education and better health facilities than the less favoured states. The richest states (accounting for about a third of the population) have been growing one and a half times as rapidly as the poorer states (which also account for a third of the population). The literacy rate in the poorer states is 26 per cent; it is 39 per cent in the rich ones. The number of hospital beds in the poorer states is 4.8 per 1000; it is more than double that figure in the rich states.

We thus find ourselves in a peculiar situation. On the global level, not all the rich countries have grown richer nor have all the poor grown poorer, and the overall gap is the same. Yet we are asking for a new international economic order in the belief that this would help the poorer countries catch up with the rest. In our own country, however, the rich states are growing richer but we seem to be ignoring this state of affairs right on our doorstep and treating it as of no consequence.

Lessons: It should be easier for us to deal with our own inequalities than those of the world. And if we are so convinced that it is these inequalities that stand between us and prosperity, then why not start putting our own house in order before turning to the rest of the world? And what applies to India, applies to other countries also.

Personally, I do not buy the argument that we are poor because somebody else is richer than he ought to be, or I think he ought to be. I am also not convinced that a more equitable distribution of incomes would make for higher growth. There is not all that big a difference in the income distribution patterns among countries. Bangladesh is among the poorest countries of the world —a chronic basket case if ever there was one— but going by World Bank figures, it is not such a bad case as, say, India. The top 20 per cent in Bangladesh account for 42 per cent of household income, against 49 per cent in India.

Mexico is supposed to be such a revolutionary country and also a major oil producer, but the income pattern there is even more skewed than in India or, for that matter, the United States. There is actually not a great deal of difference between the relative incomes of the top 60 per cent in the US and Bangladesh, but they seem to belong to totally different worlds.

The reasons why some countries are poor and some countries are rich are far more complex than can be neatly listed on yellow-lined pads. If we really wish to know why we are poor, we have only to look in the mirror: for we are our own worst enemy.

ICIM—INDIA TODAY ECONOMIC FORECAST

The Road To Recovery

> *"Now, here, you see it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"*
> *—The Red Queen*
> LEWIS CARROLL Through The Looking Glass.

THE ECONOMY is projected to grow at 5 per cent over the new year, 1983-84. Much of this growth will be eroded by the annual increase in population, so the standard of living measured by per capita Gross National Product (GNP) will grow at 2.8 per cent. Following a year of decline in standards, when the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) barely registered an increase of 0.5 per cent, this is good news but no cause for elation. For the long overdue breakthrough avidly discussed by ministers, bureaucrats and economists, we must clearly run twice as fast.

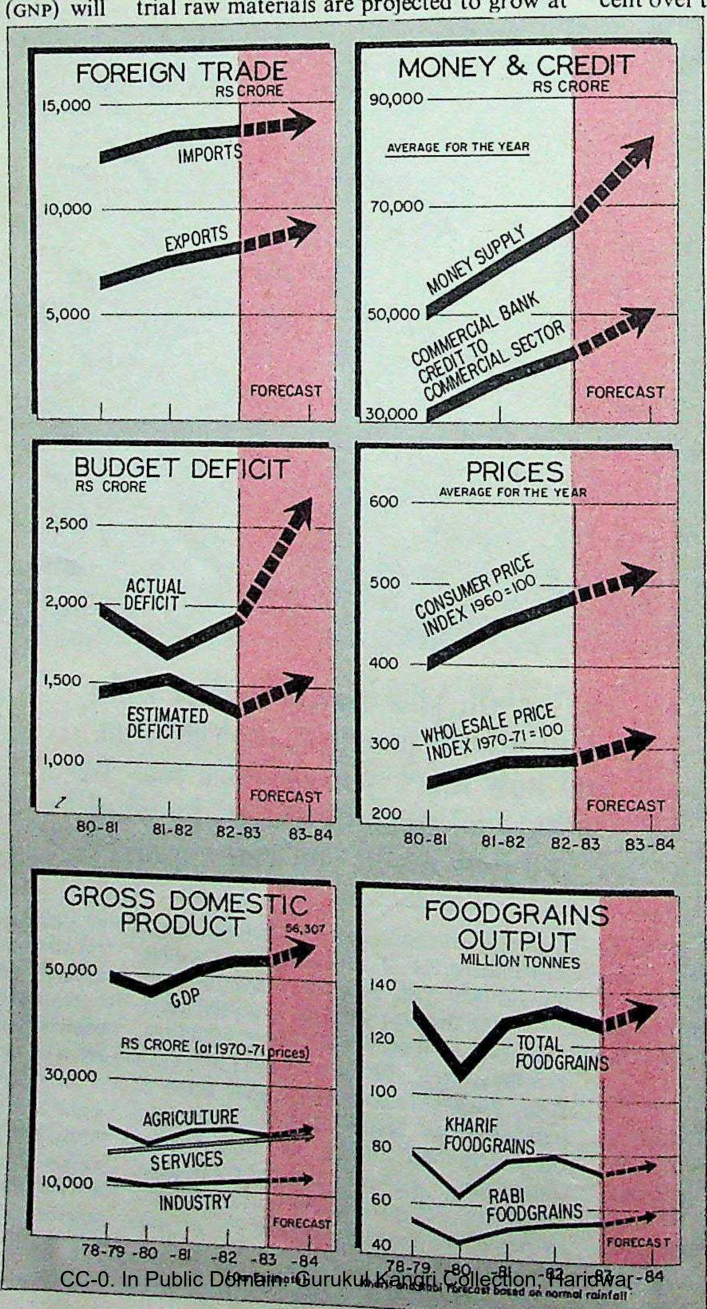
Industry recovered from the brink of recession and registered a modest growth of 3.7 per cent in 1982-83. Manufacturing industry was particularly sluggish, showing an increase of only 2 per cent. Relatively impressive performances were recorded by electricity generation (7.7 per cent) and construction (4.5 per cent).

In the manufacturing sector, food manufacturing grew sharply till October and slowed down considerably in November under the influence of a shortfall in agricultural production. The slow-down is unlikely to be reversed until November next year after the kharif harvest, if last year's betrayal by the monsoon is not repeated.

The manufacture of transport equipment and textiles declined by about 13 per cent last year. The shadow of the textiles strike, which continues to darken industrial prospects, is reducing overall industrial growth by about 1.5 per cent. The chemicals industry registered a 3 per cent increase last year, in spite of trouble in soda ash.

Unregistered manufacturing units grew faster (at 5.3 per cent) than the registered sector. While small is not necessarily beautiful, there is some evidence to support the belief that the sector is efficient and manages relatively well under tight conditions.

The outlook for 1983-84 is considerably brighter. Industrial production is forecast to be up 8.8 per cent if the textile strike is resolved. Industrial machinery and equipment can expect the sharpest growth of nearly 10 per cent, while consumer goods and industrial raw materials are projected to grow at over 8 per cent. The higher growth in ma nery and equipment (which are some called capital goods) may lead to so degree of import substitution in this sec



Foreign Trade

Much has been made in recent mon of the boom in export earnings in the fa sluggish world demand. The latest avail information indicates a growth of only 4 cent over the April-December period in 1 compared to the same period 1981.

Total export earnings next year are forecast to be 9,100 crore, a growth of 11 cent over the estimate of 8,200 crore for 1982-83.

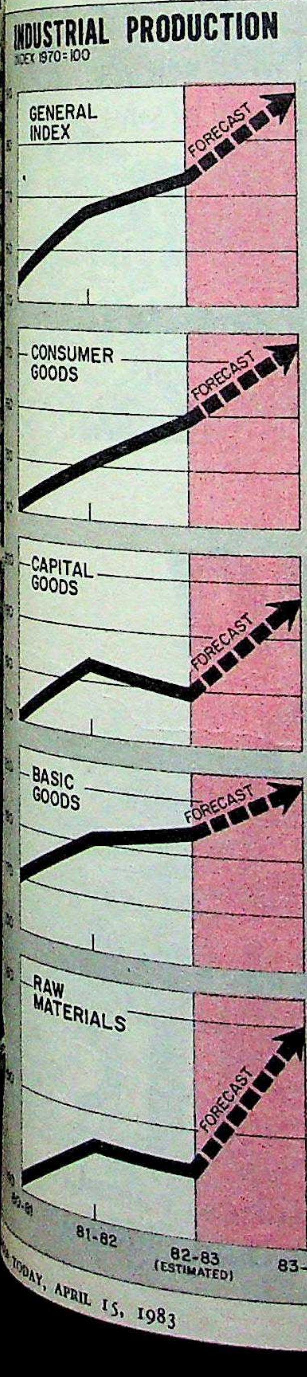
The trend in imports ex bits austerity. The cur import bill is estimated at 14,000 crore and is forecas remain at about this level. W ther this will stifle indus growth or not by introduci bottleneck in the flow of i to industry will depend where the axe falls. The eco metric model projects an incr se in the import of raw mate and a cut in the import of chinery and equipment. If fall in supply of machinery not substituted by domes production (and substitutio not always possible) the ca city for production coul choked off, with serious l term implications for grow

The arithmetic of import and export fore balances out to a smaller t deficit (the difference betw imports and exports) next y The deficit will fall by Rs 1 crore.

The final balance of p ments is, of course, much difficult to predict because pends on, among other fa the loans and grants become available durin year, including the drawi account of the loan fro International Monetary F (IMF). If we assume draw Rs 1,000 crore next year in addition to the external assistance for 1983–84, we should expect exchange reserves to fall by only Rs crore.

riculture

bad monsoon makes waves in the economy that take a long time to settle down. A in agricultural production affects output, generates inflationary tenand eats into scarce foreign exchange because of food imports. The failure last monsoon, which caused a 9 per drop in kharif food output, is to be to some extent by the rabi crop. the winter rains have failed in the rainfall in November, December and January should ensure an increase of 1.5 per cent in rabi food output. The total production of foodgrains in the year 1982–83 is expected to be 128.2 million tonnes, of which wheat production will be stagnant at 37.6 million tonnes. There is still likely to be a need to import food next year as stocks are currently at a low level.



Has agricultural production reached a plateau? In 1978–79 food production was 132 million tonnes. Four years later today, we seem to be no better off. The model, however, predicts an improved harvest of 134.6 million tonnes in 1983–84, even if the monsoon is no better than average. The reason for the high output in 1978 was an excellent monsoon, far above the average. If the monsoon next year is as good as 1978, the model suggests that food production would be comfortably over 140 million tonnes. Since 1975, a spate of very good monsoons followed by poor rainfall years has given the impression of a levelling off in agriculture. In fact we can expect to break through the 140 million tonne barrier shortly—as soon as we have the next good rainfall year. Investment in technical progress, higher irrigation potential and fertiliser production will continue to yield benefits, though it does create greater variations in output.

Money and Credit

In spite of a move towards liberalisation in recent months, the money situation was tight last year. Money supply grew at 12.2 per cent. If the liberal trend continues, we can expect a spurt of 19 per cent in money supply in 1983–84. A sharp increase would almost certainly incur the displeasure of the IMF and lead the Reserve Bank of India to reimpose controls later in the year.

Bank credit to the commercial sector will increase by about 16.4 per cent over next year. The relaxation of controls will almost definitely give a fillip to industrial production. Credit from development banks, which finance long-term investment, is expected to increase by 7.5 per cent, a significant improvement over the 3.7 per cent growth recorded last year. Although the expected increase is still too low, we may look for a general improvement in the climate for investment.

The Budget

Ten years ago it was widely believed that monetary and fiscal expansion would boost both output and prices. Faced with the hard choice between fighting inflation and averting recession, policy could steer a compromise course. Although we are more wary today of schoolboy Keynesianism with the experience of the '70s behind us, we look to the annual budget for spelling out the choices made that year.

The budget for 1983–84 avoids making a commitment and concentrates instead on whitewashing unpleasant facts. A judicious rearrangement of the accounts excludes the deficit of the states from the final deficit for 1982–83 which is shown as Rs 1,935 crore. If the deficit of the states is added on, the actual deficit is much higher at Rs 3,678 crore.

The budgeted deficit for 1983–84 is Rs 1,555 crore. The expenditure on services in the revenue account appears to be an underestimate in view of the expected increase in prices. If this is added on to the usual underestimation of the budget deficit, the actual deficit is forecast to climb to Rs 2,675 crore.

A disturbing trend in recent years is the deficit in the revenue account, which includes current administrative expenditure, and is budgeted to be Rs 1,794 crore. The model projection indicates a much higher revenue account deficit of Rs 3,075 crore. It is obvious that the resources raised through taxation are increasingly insufficient for meeting the demands of a pampered bureaucracy.

Reflections

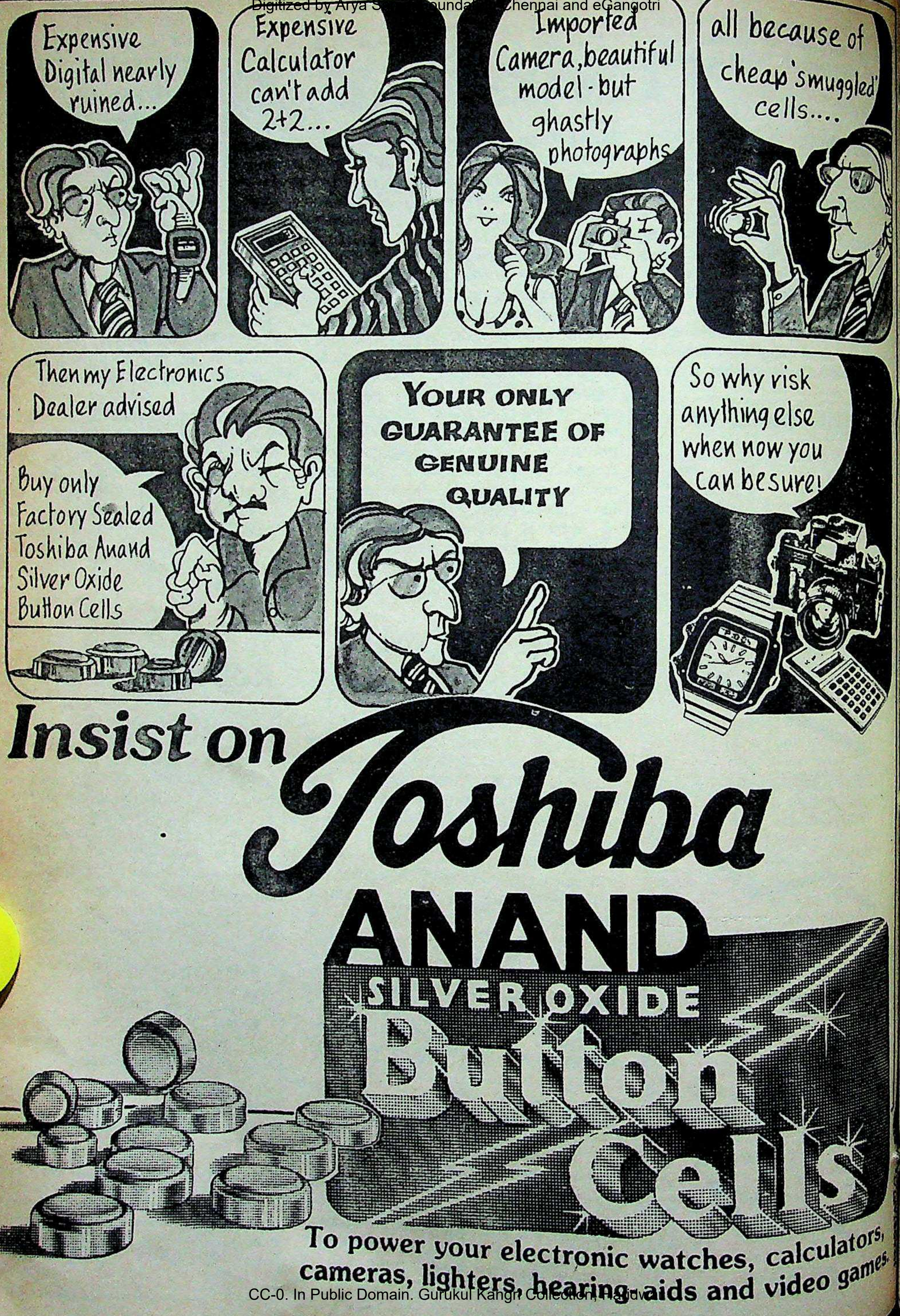
In looking glass country, facts undergo lateral inversion. They resemble reality, but are not quite true. The Economic Survey, the accepted source of many economic facts reflects this inversion. In general, its estimates for last year are too optimistic and fail to tally with our estimates for the year. By the time the data are revised, last year will have been forgotten. Three cases are noted below:

► The GDP grew at 0.5 per cent and not at 2 per cent as published in the Economic Survey.

► Industrial production grew 3.7 per cent and not 4.5 per cent as published in the Economic Survey.

► Exports grew at 12.8 per cent and not at 22.3 per cent for the period April-September 1982, compared to the same period in 1981, as published in the Economic Survey.

Economists: Devajyoti Ghose, Ashok Lahiri, Srinivas Madhur, Prannoy Roy.
Researchers: Sreekant Gupta, Roli Lal, Dipankar Purkayastha, Alka Subramanian, Wilima Wadhwa.
Data: H.L. Chandhok; **System Programming:** P. Ravi, M. Chittaranjan.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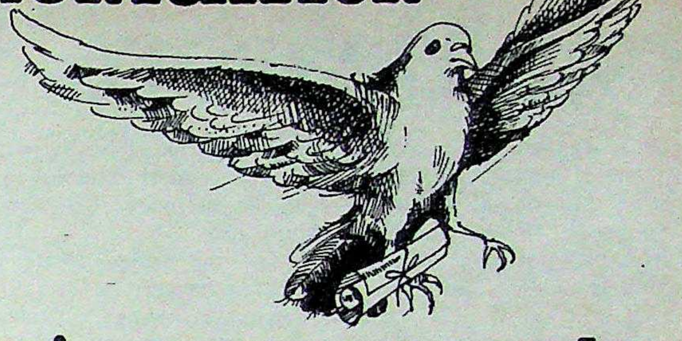

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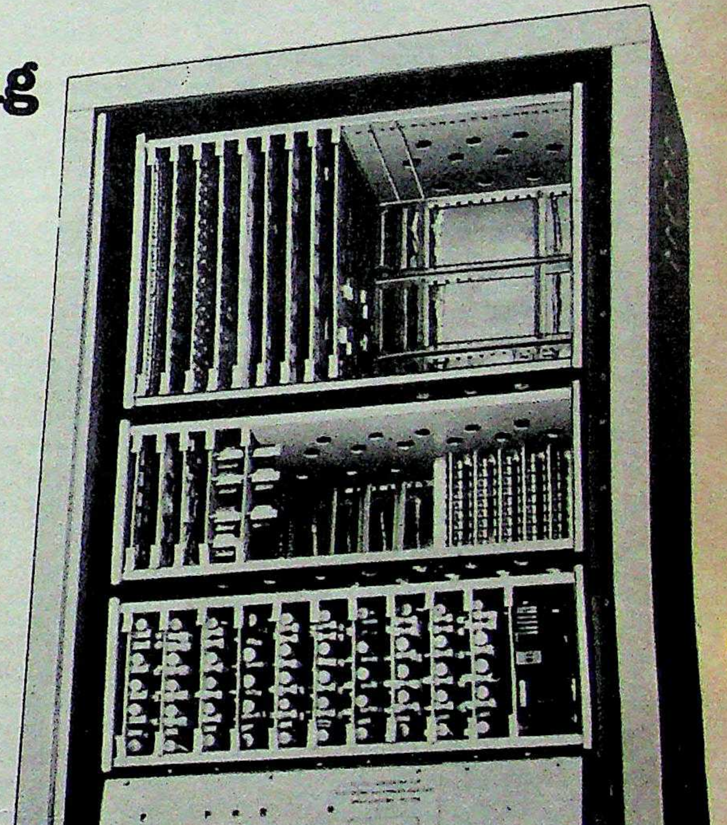

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TAXATION

Harsh Measure

IF THE language was stern, the new tax was worse. All expenditure on travel and advertising, said Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in his budget speech, was "lavish and wasteful." It was also "unproductive, avoidable and ostentatious".

Those verbal lashes have not hurt as much as the new tax measure, which states that 20 per cent of all expenditure on travel, advertising, hotels will be disallowed for tax purposes; in other words, it will be added to the company's profits and then taxed in the same manner as profits.

Reacting sharply to the patent irrationality of this measure, virtually every section of industry and trade came together last month to deliver a blast of criticism. But Mukherjee was unrelenting: in his reply to the budget debate in the Rajya Sabha, he refused to withdraw the levy, arguing that it was essential to curb the tendency to spend.

A.R. Balsara,
managing director, Balsara Hygiene Products.

"The smaller and weaker you are, the more this new law will hit you. The tax that we will now have to pay will be more than our actual earnings."

But this hardly countered the specific points of criticism that had poured into the Finance Ministry:

- ▶ The tax disallowance failed to distinguish between essential spending on travel and advertising, on the one hand, and wasteful expenditure on the other. Was even salesmen's travel "unproductive, avoidable and ostentatious"?
- ▶ It would apply at the same rate of 20 per cent, even if companies reduced such spending, thereby providing no incentive to cut spending.
- ▶ The disallowance would prove a greater burden on the smaller and newer companies struggling to find a place in the market, while the larger, more established companies would be able to absorb the new burden with relative ease.
- ▶ The tax would create an artificial distinction between real and taxable profits, in some cases forcing companies that had incurred losses to pay tax on "profits" nevertheless.
- ▶ The disallowance would add to the complexities of tax administration, leading to litigation and various means of avoidance, legal and illegal.
- ▶ The Congress(I) Government had, three years ago, withdrawn a similiar (but less harsh) measure introduced by the Janata government in 1978.

Varied Impact: The new law will affect different industries in different ways, and its impact will vary from unit to unit within the same industry. Much of heavy industry and the manufacturers of industrial raw materials will be all but unaffected, since they do not need to advertise heavily. Not so, however, in the case of consumer goods producers, who have to advertise constantly and keep their salesmen on the move to ensure product sales. But the most severely hit will be companies offering marketing and other services, since the bulk of their expenses are in the now disallowed categories.

Advertising agencies are hit twice over. First, their business will suffer as clients slash advertising budgets. Next, their own travel and other bills will come in for the taxman's axe. Ram Sehgal of Hindustan Thompson Associates (HTA), the country's largest advertising agency, estimates that HTA's post-tax profits will drop from Rs 5.5 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh. "Many other companies in our position will be similarly hit," said Sehgal.

The press is another victim, especially small and medium newspapers. Said Ram Tarneja, managing director of Bennett Coleman, publisher of *The Times of India* chain of newspapers and magazines: "The press will be affected more than any other industry. The curbs on travel expenditure will make the gathering of news, our raw material more expensive, and the job of increasing circulation more difficult, while curbs on advertising will reduce the amount of advertisements flowing in."

Misconception: Finance Minister Mukherjee seems to have pushed the disallowance through on the basis of several misconceptions. One is that it will hit luxurious travel and free-spending in five-star hotels. But the bulk of travel in most companies is done by run-of-the-mill salesmen who tour towns and villages, developing and ning markets. A Hindustan Lever sman said that the company spends per cent of its total travel budget on executives. The rest is primary business motion.

Gajanand Pendharkar,
managing director, Vicco Laboratories,

"To compete with established manufacturers, advertising has to be as large theirs. But our turnover is smaller, so this disallowance hits us much harder."

In any case, the Government alre sallows the bulk of corporate spendi hotels: the upper limit for such expen as far as tax deduction is concerned, is Rs in the metropolitan towns, and Rs 150 where else. Expenditure on guest-hou disallowed for tax purposes anyway.

A second misconception relates to purpose of advertising. Much of it is festly unavoidable: some advertise (like company notices and share capi ues) are statutorily mandated. Appo advertisements and the bulk of produc vertising are similarly inescapable.

But the most basic misconce seemed to be that the tax disallowance hit directly at the big companies and nationals who are seen as the big-budg vertisers, and whose high-living exe seem to set ostentatious spending sta The truth is quite the opposite. Vishw chairman of Interads Advertising, sa bulk of his clients who have expres desire to hold back in the face of the cent disallowance belong to the smal medium category.

Uneven Effect: Detailed evidence comes from Pramod Shah, a Bombay- chartered accountant and manageme sultant. Shah's study of a range of co in the consumer goods field shows manifestly inequitous effect of the ta lowance. Shah looked at the amount tional sales that companies would current profitability levels to make loss in net profits caused by the 20

. Venugopal

ive director, Spencers

"Companies surviving on rginal profits will have to back on such expenses. ofits in near monopolistic rket conditions will shrug f the new levy."

ance. Assuming that increases in ould need further inputs of advertis- travel in the existing ratios, his study the multiplier effect that results and at the total increase in sales required mpany to maintain its present profi-. The results show up a sharp diffe- the degree of impact on the big and ll companies.

rporate giant Reliance Textiles 1.45 per cent of its turnover on the ed expenses. Assuming that the com- pays corporate tax (which it doesn't) it ed a 6 per cent increase in sales to in its net profit at current levels. g the multiplier effect, this goes up to cent. In contrast, a smaller firm like last (which makes moulded luggage) cified expenses totalling 7.7 per cent s and will need a daunting 64.4 per crease in sales to maintain profits. g the multiplier effect, the figure goes an unreachable 172.6 per cent.

hese contrasts between big and small repeated almost endlessly. Gwalior 's specified expenses form just 0.93 t of turnover, and the company will ly a 6.8 per cent increase in sales to its profits. In comparison, Zandu aceuticals, an ayurvedic medicine cturer with a turnover last year of Rs ore, has 6.99 per cent of its turnover ted for by the specified expenses. The ny will need a 50.8 per cent increase in 103 per cent with the multiplier) to se the impact of the 20 per cent dis- ce. Curewell India, another small aceutical firm with sales in 1980 of Rs lakh, will need a phenomenal 214 per crease in sales to retain its present pro- M. Parikh of Zandu Pharmaceuticals at without an increase in sales, his company's profits would drop by 30 per cent.

Inherent Bias: Arguing that the tax disallowance is "patently pro-monopoly and pro-large companies and anti-competition," Shah cites further instances to show that the larger companies spend only a small part of their turnover on travel and advertising (even though the absolute numbers are large), while it is the smaller companies that have to spend heavily in order to promote sales in the market-place.

Among the largest advertisers, ITC will need only 7.3 per cent extra sales (after accounting for the multiplier effect) to make good the drop in profits. In the case of Reliance Textiles, it is 6.5 per cent, and Gwalior Rayon, 7.4 per cent. For Asian Paints, it is 7.2 per cent and Hindustan Lever, 5.8 per cent. Electronics and electricals giant Peico will need only a 14 per cent increase in sales to protect profits.

In contrast, smaller drug companies like E. Merck (turnover: Rs 16.5 crore) will need a 24.6 per cent increase, Richardson Hindustan, 46.9 per cent and Ranbaxy, 24.5 per cent.

In the consumer goods field, the contrasts are even starker. Balsara Hygiene Products, which since its start in 1978 has racked up impressive toothpaste and toiletry sales of Rs 18 crore annually, spends an astonishing 20 per cent of its turnover on the specified expenses in order to effectively compete with toothpaste giants Colgate-Palmolive, Hindustan Lever, Forhans, Ciba-Geigy and others. Balsara Managing Director A.R. Balsara says: "The smaller and weaker you are, the more this new law will hit you. The tax that we will now have to pay will be more than our actual earnings. So this disallowance will effectively wipe out the company." Balsara calculates that his tax rate will rise from 70 per cent to 120 per cent of his real profits (as different from the fictional "profits" which the taxman will use as the basis for his calculations after adding the disallowance to actual profits).

O.P. Vaish

tax consultant

"There is no link between the stated objective of this new burden and the manner in which it has been legislated. Any and all expenditure under the stated heads qualifies for the 20 per cent tax disallowance."

Necessary Expenditure: Bal Pandit, secretary to the small-scale All-India Toothpaste and Toothpowder Manufacturers' Association, says that they have sent a memorandum to Mukherjee arguing precisely this point: that the small manufacturers who have in recent years made major inroads into the markets dominated by multinationals will now be "wiped out" by the disallowance measure. Said Pandit: "For our competitors, these expenses form a marginal proportion of total sales. But in our case they are a crucial input."

Vicco Laboratories is in a similar position. Managing Director Gajanand Pendharkar says the specified expenses for his company come to over 25 per cent of the Rs 8 crore turnover, and the 20 per cent disallowance on travel and advertising will wipe out all existing profits. Said Pendharkar: "To compete with the established large manufacturers in toiletries and medications, our total quantum of advertising has to be as large as theirs. But our turnover is much smaller, so this disallowance hits us much harder. In my case, the disallowance will be higher than my net profits, so I will be completely wiped out."

Bottling companies are no better off. In one case of a company earning Rs 10 lakh net profit but spending Rs 16 lakh on travel and advertising, the disallowance would effectively raise the tax burden to 96.2 per cent of profits, thus wiping out virtually all the profits.

Said a Bombay bottler of a soft drink company: "If the Government does not want people to advertise, they should not give any more licences since the need to advertise is created by production capacity being larger than demand. We should now go back to an economy of shortages and allow everybody to stand in queues for everything. That way there will be no need for advertising."

WITH the consequences of the disallowance measures as drastic as they are, most companies were still too stunned last fortnight to formulate strategies to handle the situation. In a typical reaction, R.M. Ratnam, vice-president of EID Parry, the Madras-based conglomerate, said: "We still have no idea as to what to d about the disallowance. Our efforts will be t see that it is withdrawn."

Others were still hoping that th Government would change its mind an delete this provision from the Finance Bill Said R.T. Narayanan, marketing director o Ponds (India): "I am still hopeful that th

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Ashok Jain
president elect, FICCI

The biggest increase in advertising in recent years has been by state governments, and the political parties themselves. "Would they call all this wasteful? If so, why do they indulge in it?"

extent of disallowance will be diluted before the measure ultimately finds place in the statute book." Narayanan pointed out that the tax disallowance did not even exempt the sales promotion undertaken for exports. "Hopes of dilution of the measure have dissuaded us from formulating emergency strategies for absorbing the extra tax burden."

Nevertheless, there seemed little question of trying to mount campaigns to increase sales in order to neutralise the reduction in profits. Said one soap company executive: "The market is going through a recession already. So where is the question of increasing sales?"

Limited Options: The options then were to either hike prices or cut advertising costs. R. Venugopal, executive director of Spencers in Madras, said: "Companies surviving on marginal profits will have to cut back on such expenses. But those making sizeable profits in near monopolistic market conditions will shrug off the new levy."

Pramod Shah
management consultant

The tax disallowance is "patently pro-monopoly and pro-large companies and anti-competition."

Khokhan Mukherjee, presid Advertising Club in Calcutta, felt t little scope for cutting expenses in a c tive market. Mukherjee and others e instead, a greater effort to get more advertising budgets, with co changing their advertising policies. M pected a sharp reduction in advertis in small- and medium newspapers, a happened when H.M. Patel slapped a advertising tax in 1978. Many also exp a sharp (and partly deliberate) cut in adv sing through television and radio, as th to teach the Government a lesson: the R crore that Finance Minister Mukher hoped to get from his tax disallow would be mostly lost through lower TV radio advertising!

Nevertheless, the advertising age expected a gloomy year ahead. Ansh nerjee, director of Ogilvy, Benson a Mather (OBM), had little doubt that b ness would drop by 15 per cent, instea rising by 15 per cent, as had been expe earlier. And at least some companies—I being one—were reviewing marketing penditures and planning to go in for expensive forms of advertising.

Illogical Decision: What seemed mystify many industrialists was the abs of any logic in the new imposition. S DCM's Bharat Ram: "If all that the fina minister wanted was Rs 50 crore in reve he could simply have raised the corpora rate by the required percentage points. M ters would have been simple, and th would have been no new accounting hea ches."

O.P. Vaish, a Delhi-based tax cons tant, pointed to another basic flaw: "The no link between the stated objective of t new burden and the manner in which it h been legislated. If the aim is to cut oste tious spending, then first create a distinc between what is genuine business req ment and what is ostentation. Then g companies the incentive to reduce their necessary expenditure. But there are no s distinctions, and no incentives. Any and expenditure under the stated heads qu for the 20 per cent tax disallowance."

Ashok Jain, president-elect of the Fe ration of Indian Chambers of Comme and Industry (FICCI), felt the new bu would lead to a great deal of litigation what was allowable and what was not. and others pointed out that the bigges crease in advertising in recent years ha by none other than the state governm with large newspaper supplements, an political parties themselves. "Would t call all this wasteful? If so, why do indulge in it?"

—T.N. NINA

CHANDER UDAY SINGH with bure

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—T.N. NINAN
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DAY, APRIL 15

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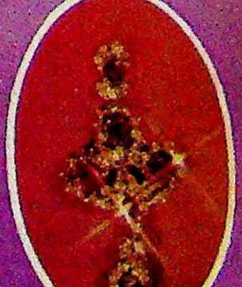

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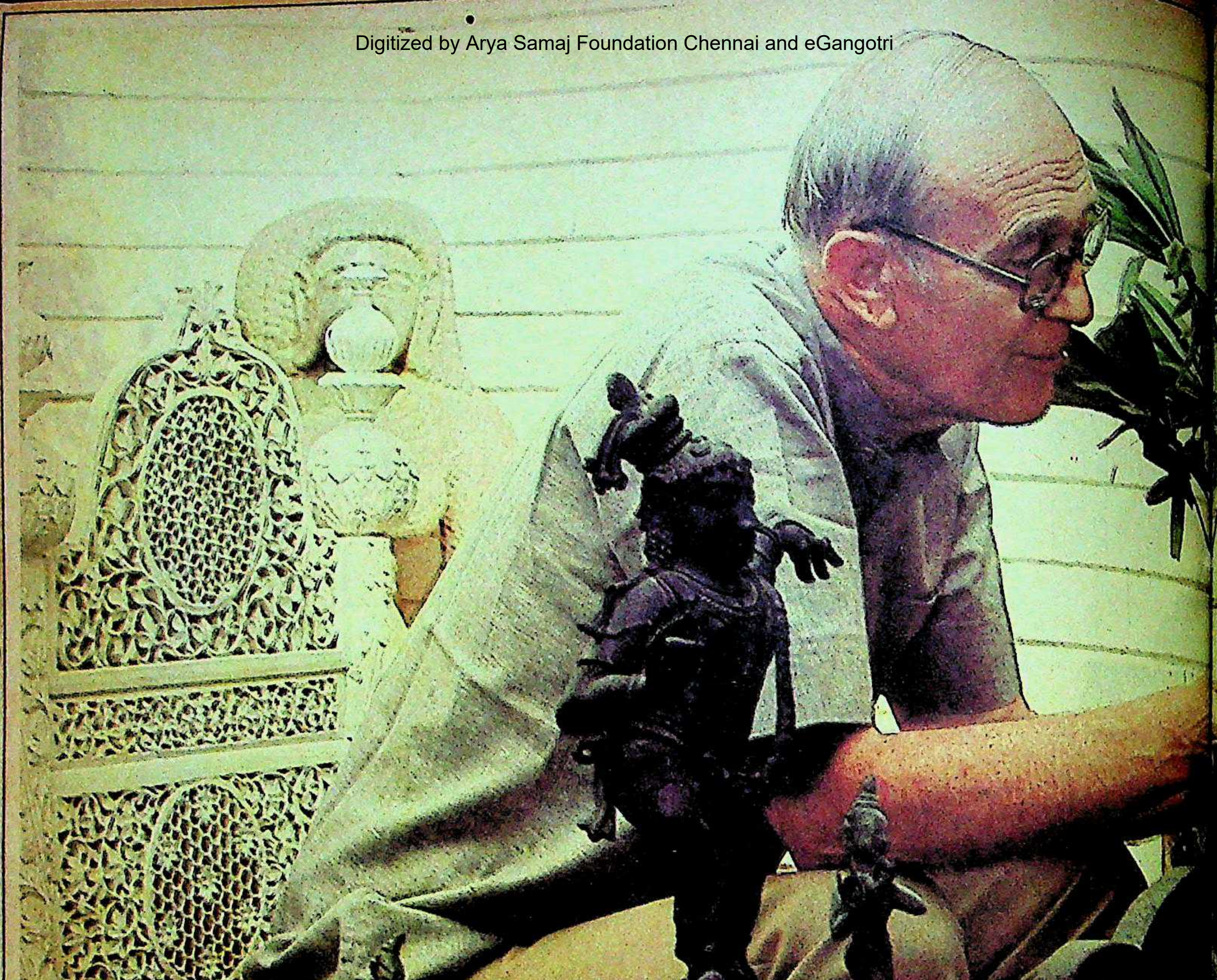

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MARKET

he Share Scare

CK market flutters usually cause e rates to rise, but last month's etic activity on the usually quiet Stock Exchange was particularly renalin stuff. At the centre of the ent were two of the country's 10 big- vate sector giants—Delhi Cloth and Mills (DCM) and Escorts. The prices companies' shares in virtual unison from February, scaling unprece- heights and setting off mours of take-over bids. the end of last fortnight, seemed at one stage to be up as the corporate the decade appeared to more than a speculative leading nowhere in particular.

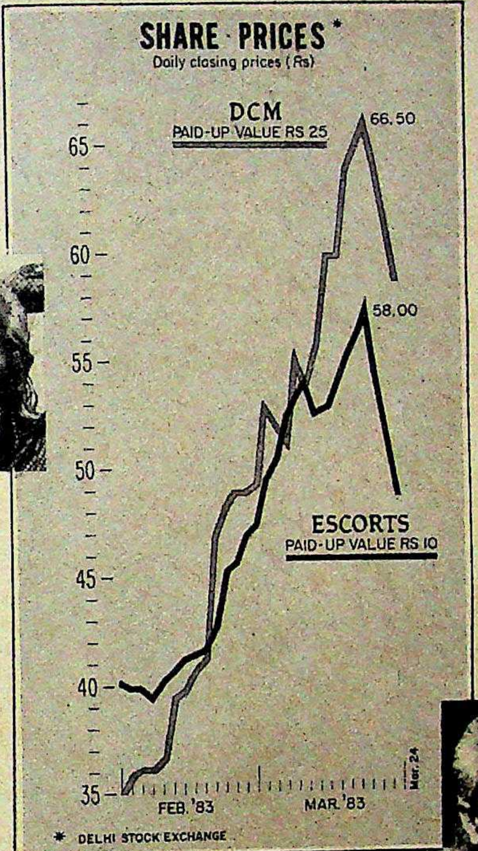
was heady drama nevertheless. DCM rose steadily through February from 31 for a Rs 25 share to Rs 49 at end, and then, the pace accelerating, to a dizzy Rs 67.75 on March 21 falling back. The price had virtually in a hectic six weeks—at a time company was going through a diffi- riod and the share value should have ropping.

The Escorts story was very similar. The y's Rs 10 shares rose on the market Rs 39.75 to Rs 59—a 50 per cent leap d, once again when the company was ing a set-back in 1982.

picions Aroused: Something cer- seemed afoot. And DCM Chairman Ram was worried enough by the de- ents to check out with what the stock said were the behind-the-scenes rs. But R.P. Goenka, who attempted late last year on Premier Automobiles om the corporate world has come to a particularly predatory operator, that he was in the game. So did Lohia es, which had collected Rs 90 crore as from hopeful scooter-buyers and brokers) was using the money to some of the buying.

corts Chairman H.P. Nanda was mystified by the sudden rise in his y's shares, but dismissed the possibi- anyone trying to grab the company s hands.

n both cases, the managements were pretty because, though holding relati- all components of the total shares (10 in the case of Nanda, and not much in the case of the late Lala Shriram's ors in DCM), they had the backing of werful public sector financial institutions. The institutions hold a little over 40 per cent of DCM's shares, and even more in the case of Escorts. Said Nanda; "The Government has given clear directives to the institutions about not changing the management of well-run companies, and I have no fear from that quarter."



Bharat Ram (above left) and Nanda: firm control

Wresting Control: What seemed to make DCM share behaviour more than ordinarily interesting was the speculation that the two brothers, Bharat Ram and Charat Ram, were themselves busy acquiring shares as part of a winner-take-all battle for control of DCM. The brothers are not on the best of terms, and the differences have if anything sharpened of late. Charat Ram, DCM managing director, said he was not interested in the subject despite the "most unusual spurt," and suggested his elder brother might know more about the matter. Bharat Ram admitted frankly that he had indeed been buying his company's shares on a fairly substantial scale (an additional 2 per cent of total), but said this was in January, before the stock market went wild. In any case, he had informed Charat Ram about this and the matter was no secret. "I bought for investment purposes. There is no question of either of us trying to wrest control of the company. The shareholding pattern is such that this is simply not possible."

Bharat Ram as well as Nanda of Escorts pointed out that no applications had come in for transfer of share ownership, and felt the stock market bubble would be exposed very soon, when prices started falling.

Nevertheless, it wasn't all empty-handed speculation. Delhi Stock Exchange Executive Director R.K. Pandey said as many as 3 lakh DCM shares (over 3 per cent of the total) had changed hands in the last month, and about 1 lakh Escorts shares had also been bought. "If it was just empty speculation, shares would not actually change hands in this fashion," Pandey said.

Swift Reaction: The most likely explanation that seemed to emerge was that market operators, getting wind of Bharat Ram's steady acquisition, scented trouble and a battle for control, and promptly tried to grab shares in the hope of demanding their price from the principals. But leading stockbrokers who are known to have been in the thick of the action were tight-lipped, refusing to divulge any information about their operations or the identity of the principals behind the scenes.

Harish Bhasin, president of the Delhi Stock Exchange, felt Indians abroad had something to do with the whole operation. "This is only the beginning. With the new rules concerning non-resident investment in shares, huge sums are going to come in and the stock market as a whole will see a boom." Bhasin conceded, however, that the sharp rise in DCM and Escorts shares was "unhealthy" and that prices would drop.

If that were the case, a lot of fingers would get burnt. Nanda felt the big buyers, whoever they were, would probably come to him later with the threat of making a nuisance of themselves at the next annual meeting of shareholders unless he bought them off. "My message to them is that I have no money to give anybody. I have in fact been selling my shares to the financial institutions in order to meet my tax liabilities."

Towards the end of last fortnight, Nanda's worry was not about any takeover but what the sudden spurt in his company's share prices would do to his wealth tax bill. This is calculated on the basis of the last price quoted at the end of the financial year, and a doubling of Escorts share prices would notionally double Nanda's wealth on this account. But there was hope for him yet: with a week to go for the year-end, the price had dropped from a peak of Rs 59.00 to Rs 48.75.

—T.N. NINAN

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STC

The Car Crash

THE PRICES of essential commodities are going up, but in some select areas they are coming down too: foreign cars, for instance. The country's well-heeled either do not have much money any more, or they have found other ways of getting their cars. In reality it is both.

For many years, the Government-owned State Trading Corporation (STC) has made fat killings on selling hundreds of prestige cars that it has obtained from departing diplomats. Suddenly, however, the Mercedes boom seems to be over. Prices of the most prestigious cars offered at STC's monthly auctions have plummeted without warning by up to 30 per cent.

Two years ago, a Mercedes 300 D sold for Rs 12.2 lakh. But late last year, a similar car fetched no more than Rs 8.5 lakh. Volvos, Peugeots and Volkswagen Golfs have all suddenly lost in value; only Japanese cars, especially Toyotas, seem to be holding their own, going for around Rs 4.5 lakh now as before. A worried STC management sees little chance of the situation improving. "Prices will stay at their present level in future also," says STC Chairman P.K. Dasgupta.

The big buyers seem to have suddenly disappeared from the market. STC officials point out that the big agents, who used to buy the bulk of STC's cars on behalf of film stars and industrialists, now stay away from the auctions, or buy very few at the reduced prices.

A number of factors have combined to bring about what is an unprecedented slump:

► The harsh credit squeeze last year caused severe cash flow problems to many companies; and by the time the banks were willing to lend, business itself had taken a plunge in many industries. So the corporate market has shrunk.

► Film stars, another major category of buyers, seem to have become cagey about flaunting their wealth. A series of income tax raids on their residences seems to have convinced them that wisdom lies in giving the go-by to ego-trips in the country's most expensive cars. On top of this, a number of recent films have flopped, so there is less money to flaunt anyway.

► The import of large numbers of Mercedes by the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) and private tourist-car operators (to facilitate hosting the Asian Games and the Non-aligned Summit) has meant the easy availability of these cars on hire to those who like the comfort and can afford it. The ITDC alone has imported over a hundred Mercedes.

► But the most important reason seems to be the simple fact that many people find it more attractive now to simply import cars directly from abroad. This was not possible till six years ago, when such imports were effectively banned. They still are, but a variety of exemptions have provided the loopholes that businessmen have proceeded to exploit.

Little Incentive: An STC official said there was little incentive to choose the import option earlier, when the price difference between STC-sold cars and directly imported vehicles was too great to make the latter course attractive. But with the prices of STC cars rising steadily and peaking in 1981, many industrialists decided to explore the import option—and found it an enchantingly simple business.

Under the import policy, a number of categories of people are allowed to get cars from abroad after paying the customs duty. These include branches/offices of foreign institutions, sole representatives in India of foreign companies, "air companies", Indian firms executing contracts or engaged in joint ventures overseas, and a variety of other groups such as the physically handicapped and foreign women married to Indians. The more important of these have obviously been the corporate categories. And with thousands of Indian companies either representing counterparts abroad, or themselves conducting operations outside the country, the field was wide open to the bulk of STC's clients. A new Mercedes could be imported after paying 257 per cent import around Rs 12 lakh to Rs 14 lakh— the same as for a two-year-old Mercedes from STC.

Commerce Ministry officials do not have figures immediately the number of import licences given but the number is believed to have sharply. One Delhi businessman Gandhi herself had recently the increasing numbers of foreign Delhi's roads.

Damage Likely: For STC, this lopment has not yet caused as much as it is likely to in the coming 1982–83, it sold 564 foreign cars for crore, whereas 556 cars in the previous had fetched over Rs 13 crore. The drop in prices is estimated at 11 per cent drop in profits from car sales has been ter: from Rs 8.4 crore to Rs 7.3 crore. considered to be a relatively good mance, given the market situation relation to what seems to store. Last August, in fact, as as 180 cars had piled up yards for want of buyers at tractive price. STC Chairman gupta was then forced to through a decision to sell the the going rate and clear the rather than to conduct a operation. Stocks at the end year had been brought down cars.

Ironically, the small cars that can be brought in ly cheaply do not seem to be imported in noticeable Cars with engines of 16 power and less attract a lower of 192 per cent, and medium Japanese cars can therefore brought in for under Rs 1.5 lakh—not more than the price that Hindustan might be forced to charge for its new hall-Isuzu model. Yet the imports that taken place are almost wholly of models.

Though concerned about the profits, STC officials felt they could about the new turn of events. Said one did write to the Government some requesting that the imports be stopped we are generally criticised for making much profits on car sales anyway. don't expect much to be done on this

Any suggestion that this implied within wheels seemed far-fetched, but trialists seemed happy with the Last fortnight, one Delhi businessman in fact flying in a new car from Hong the fear that the new import policy an end to the bonanza.

—T.N.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The STC's fleet of foreign cars: few takers

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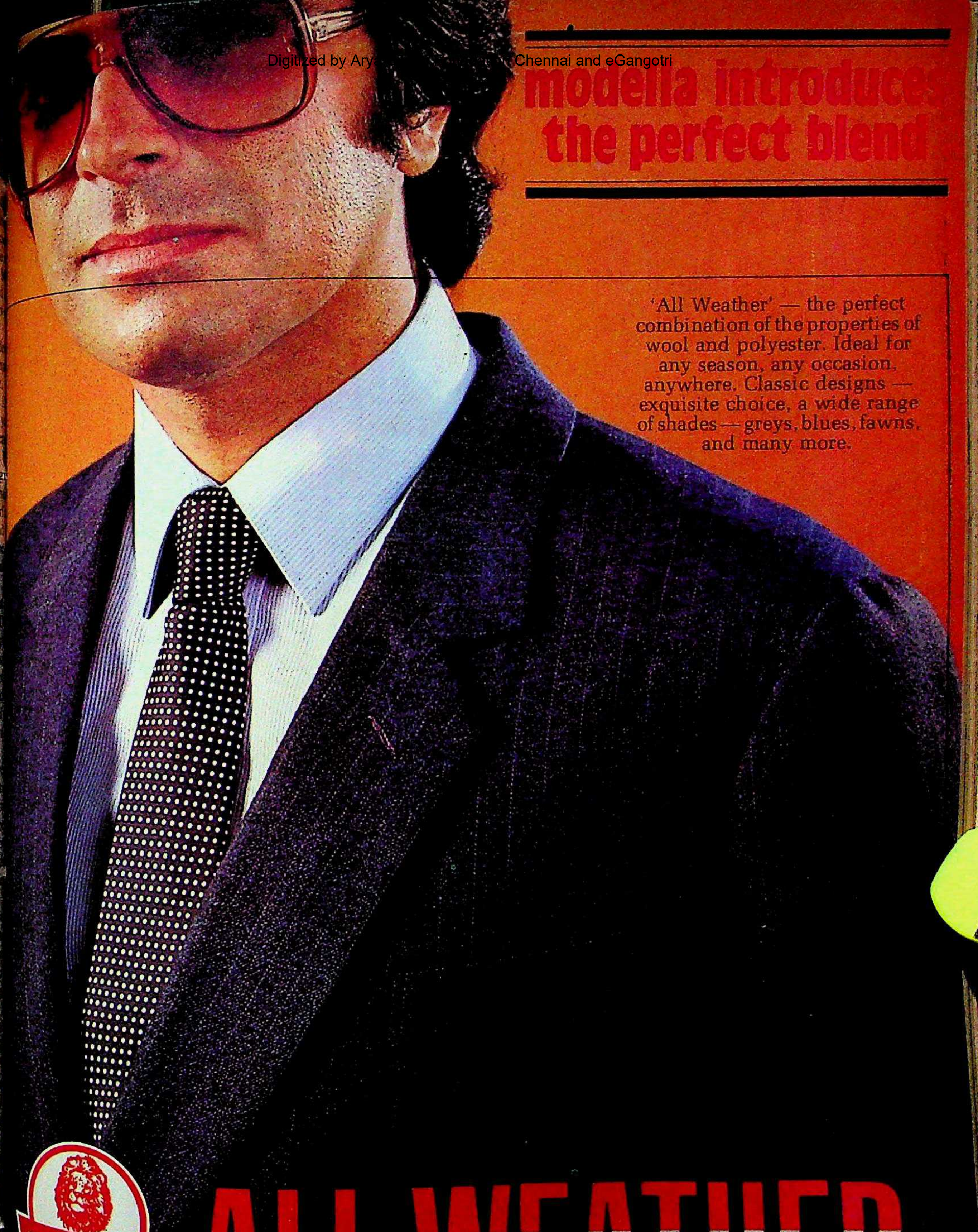

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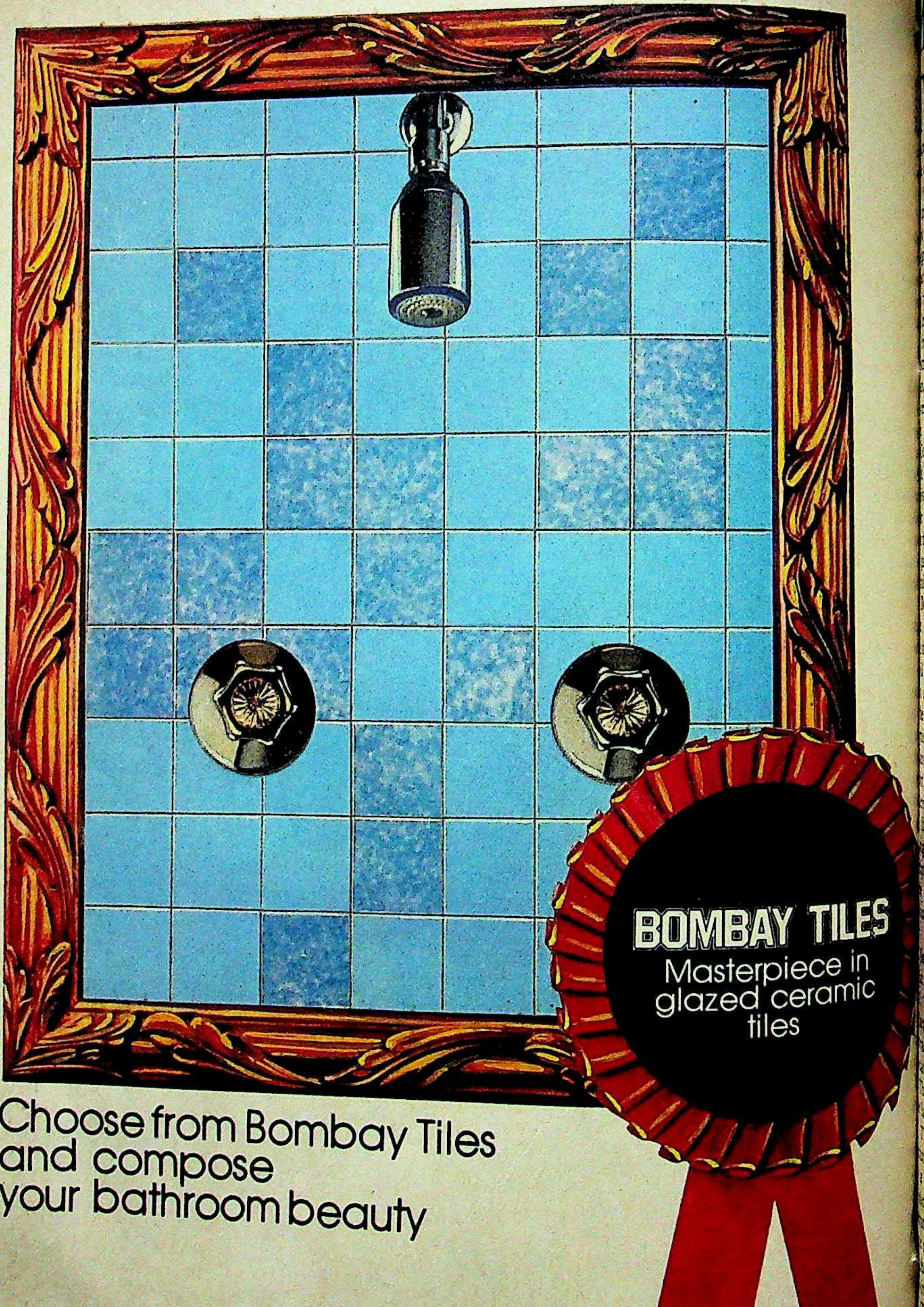

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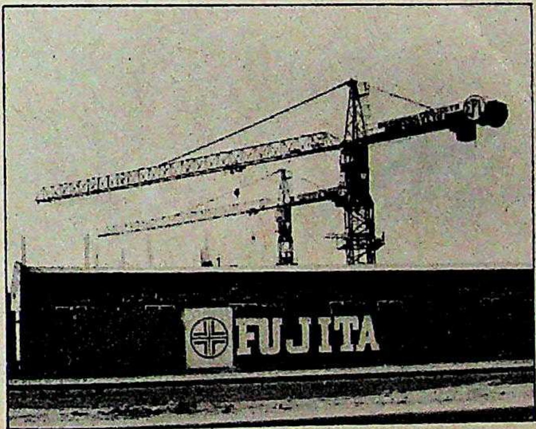
E LONG-AWAITED drop in international oil prices has brought mediate relief to a beleaguered economy struggling with daunting ficits. But this might soon prove to y mixed blessing: the estimated Rs re saving on oil imports this year e more than offset by a drop in exchange earnings from construction s in the oil-rich Arabian Gulf, and emittances sent home by the million- dians working in the Gulf countries. dian companies have contracts worth mated Rs 2,500 crore in the Gulf , and the annual remittance flow from sident Indians is another Rs 2,000 But with oil revenues slumping, and lf country after another announcing budgets, cutbacks in spending and ation programmes, India's petro- earnings might soon see a slump. f remittances drop by 20 per cent, in on lower oil prices will be ised.

elayed Reaction: Last fort- however, government officials till too euphoric about the savings to give thought to such worries. onstruction companies operating e Arab countries dismiss the few s reports of a sudden exodus of s from the Gulf, and the airlines no change in their normal traffic s. But the construction companies e recruitment agencies that have up to feed the Gulf labour market ate a drying up of new contracts, and a delayed reaction to the oil slump uld make itself felt a few months from

id H.C. Malhotra, chairman of the ector Engineering Projects India Ltd "We have seen no immediate impact. we are currently negotiating a new ct in Abu Dhabi and have received no ion that the project might be called e effect of the oil slump might be felt a ater."

at sentiment is echoed by a senior e of Mackinnon Mackenzie, which large labour recruitment and export : "There has been no impact on our ons to date, though it is possible that cutbacks may take place in the future. e moment, our normal recruitment es are in progress."

ere is little doubt that the Gulf is g out of petro-dollars. With oil pro- n by the Organisation of Petroleum ng Countries (OPEC) dropping from a 1979 peak of 31 million barrels a day (mbd) to 17.5 mbd, and prices dropping by five dollars a barrel, OPEC's total revenues have virtually halved. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), where around 350,000 Indians make a living, cut government spending by 20 per cent last year, to Rs 6,000 crore, and is likely to effect further cuts this year. Some stray building and industrial projects have already been cancelled or shelved—including a new oil refinery and a prestigious 60-storey building designed to be the tallest in the region. Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman too have announced budget deficits ranging from Rs 500 crore to Rs 1,000 crore, and cut back on development spending.



EPI project in Dubai: uncertain future

Many Problems: Last fortnight's drop in oil prices was not, however, the only reason for this change in fortunes. Problems had been building up since early 1982—for a variety of reasons. The first and most obvious was the seemingly endless Iran-Iraq war, forcing both countries to the edge of bankruptcy and Iraq to borrow from such unlikely candidates as the United States and Turkey. Iraq has been India's biggest construction client, but has cut new projects to the bone and held up payments on work already done. Last month, it finally agreed to pay Rs 100 crore that were overdue, but fresh overdues have piled up again and payments could be a recurring problem. The war has also affected neighbouring Arab countries which are funding Iraq's military effort, and feeling the pinch.

Steadily increasing competition from other spade-carrying nations has been another problem. South Korea, the Philippines and others have homed in on Gulf contracts with a greater sense of purpose than their Indian counterparts and eclipsed India's initial advantage. Their package of services has included an increasingly vital component—credit—that Indian companies are unable to offer. The Overseas Construction Council (OCC), the association for Indian builders abroad, has been pressing the Exim bank for credit facilities. And OCC's Deputy Secretary Joseph Lonth says: "It is a fact that number of new project bids and tenders is very much lower than earlier."

The host countries have meanwhile been launching periodic drives against aliens without valid documents—an indirect warning of slower economic activity. An estimated 5,000 Indians have left Dubai in the last six months, and another 1,000 have gone home from Kuwait.

For all these reasons, the remittance flow into India has shown signs of first flattening out and then dropping. While no precise figures are available, Finance Ministry officials admit that there has indeed been a drop.

Subdued Activity: EPI provides a good example of a construction company that finds its Gulf thrust running out of steam. Chairmain Malhotra says his company has recently completed five projects in Kuwait and Iraq, while another is nearing completion. All that remains are two contracts in Iraq, which will finish in a year. In short, unless fresh bacon comes in, EPI's export cupboard could soon be bare.

Private sector companies are not so badly off. Builders and Continental Construction still have contracts worth hundreds of crores under way, and public sector bodies like the Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON) are if anything on an aggressive drive to bag new orders. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that overseas construction activity is shifting into lower gear.

Among Indians in the Gulf, however, there is still little evidence of worry. "No one has asked us to quit," was the complacent comment of a shop clerk in Kuwait who feels the country has the financial muscle to weather the oil slump. Large numbers of Indians in the Gulf are in fact employed in clerical and other semi-skilled jobs that are not under immediate threat. Said a Kuwaiti employer: "It's not simply a question of firing a few Indians. I don't see how we can maintain our present prosperity by expelling all foreigners. Surely we are not going to be another Uganda."

A repetition of Amin's Uganda outrage does seem most unlikely. But even a smaller exodus over the coming months, and reduced construction activity, could bring about a noticeable drop in foreign exchange earnings. The widespread relief over the drop in oil prices could therefore prove shortlived.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

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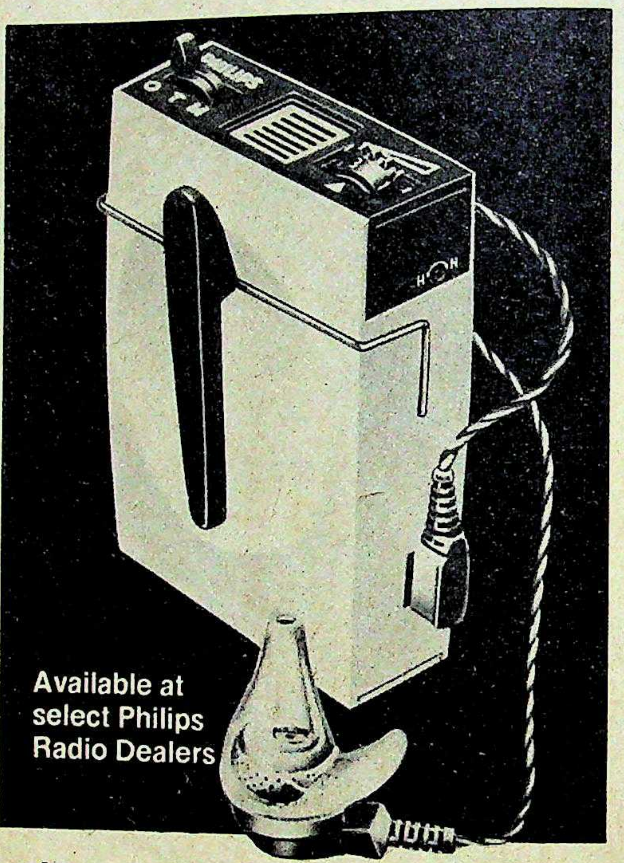

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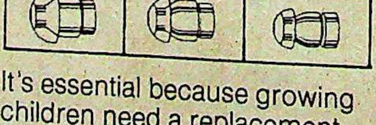

It's essential because growing children need a replacement of ear-moulds at least twice a year! Only Philips gives you this choice. The ear-tips are soft – and inexpensive!

Free Service Unit

If the hearing aid comes for repairs (which is rare) we'll give you a temporary replacement FREE. With the kind of after-sales service you can expect only from Philips.

Feather weight and compact, the Philips Hearing Aid has special design features to ensure long battery life and ease of operation.

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Through a long process of trial and error over thousands of years, Nature has found just the right balance of body building foods (protein), energy foods, (carbohydrates, fats) and health guardians (vitamins) that make mother's milk ideal for the baby.

No risk of contamination.

Your baby drinks it direct from the breast. So, there's no danger of contamination, no bother of preparation or testing the temperature.

Also, Nature has thoughtfully included in it protective "anti-bodies" to guard your baby against gastro-intestinal and other diseases. And other good things, too. For instance, vitamin C to prevent scurvy.

A breast-fed baby feels more safe and secure, too. Because you cuddle him close while he suckles to satisfy his hunger.

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Breast-feeding is now getting more and more popular even in the West as its nutritional and other benefits are getting more widely appreciated.

But what if you're not able to breast-feed for reasons of health or, maybe, because your milk is not sufficient for your baby?

Of course, you must choose the best alternative for him.

Spray dried Amulspray.

Nutritionally well balanced with prime-quality protein, easy to digest fats and carbo-hydrates and the right blend of essential vitamins and minerals.

It's easy to mix in previously boiled warm water: no need to make a paste first.

Economical.

And, Amulspray is the most economical among tinned baby foods.

Because it is made by the modern milk complex that pioneered India's "white revolution".

But be sure you use boiled water and hygienically sterilised utensils and feeding bottles. And follow the directions for use on the pack strictly to avoid overdilution and ensure adquate nourishment.

Free! Amul Baby Book
Contains 13 fact-filled chapters on Pregnancy, Antenatal Care, Confinement, Breast-feeding, Outside Feeds, Change-over to Solids, Baby's Routine, Baby's Progress, Prevention of Illness, First Aid, Common Ailments, Emotional Problems of Childhood, and Care of a Sick Child in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.
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from the makers of
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ASP/AS-2/83

MADRAS

Financial Fiasco

ANY MONEY-making scheme can be sure of attracting investors. The truth of this has been proved once again by the short saga of Vumidiar Bankers which was set up three years ago to collect fixed deposits from the public. Last fortnight the Vumidiar bubble burst when an official assignee appointed by the Madras High Court sealed the firm's offices and the police arrested its promoters Vumidi Parthasarathy and Vumidi Srinivasan who were immediately released on bail.

Trouble has been brewing for some time now. Ever since April 1982 reports have been seeping out that depositors have occasionally been refused payments. Events snowballed towards the end of last year and disgruntled depositors protesting outside the firm's offices became a common sight. Finally when these came to nothing an advocate S. Venkatraman, who had also put his money in Vumidiars, filed an insolvency petition in the High Court.

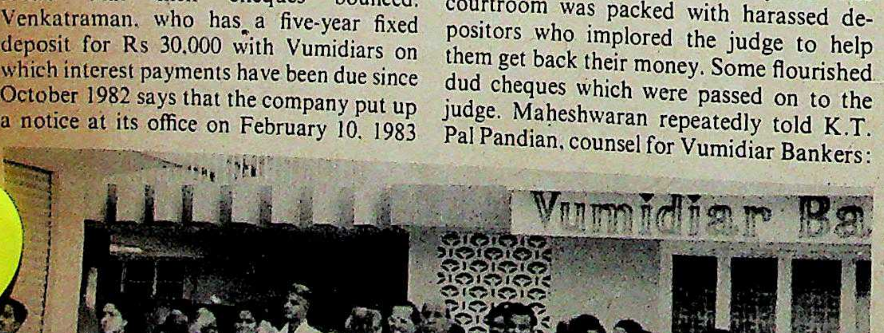
Quick Returns: Vumidiars has been raking in deposits by promising monthly interest rates of 14 to 18 per cent at a time when the banks are paying a mere 10 per cent a year. It was therefore hardly surprising that in three years the firm managed to net deposits of over Rs 4 crore and rope in over 15,000 depositors. Everything went well till mid-1982 when the company slowly started stalling about repaying maturing deposits. After that it occasionally began skipping monthly interest payments.

By the beginning of 1983 matters had deteriorated and depositors occasionally found that their cheques bounced. Venkatraman, who has a five-year fixed deposit for Rs 30,000 with Vumidiars on which interest payments have been due since October 1982 says that the company put up a notice at its office on February 10, 1983 which said that depositors would be notified about payments by February 28, 1983. He adds that the company also said that no payments would be made to any depositors on or before February 28. "Depositors were also sent individual letters on the same lines on February 11. But, needless to say, nothing has come even though February is long past," he says. Parthasarathy, however, denies that the firm put up any such notice or sent out such letters.

Another depositor A.S. Chandrabose, who works with a local firm says he has not been paid interest since January. He adds: "On repeated enquiry at the Vumidiar Bankers office, I was told that all the backlog of interest payments would be cleared by May 1983, and till then we had to patiently bear with the firm."

Chandrabose claims that the managing partner of the firm, Vumidi Parthasarathy, and his son Vumidi Srinivasan had become singularly inaccessible. The depositors finally had to enlist the help of M.K. Srinivasan, who leads a consumer movement called *'Parakkum Padai'*—flying squad—who organised a meeting between Vumidi Srinivasan and a delegation of depositors. Vumidi Srinivasan admitted at the meeting that the company had some temporary difficulties because of mismanagement of funds but assured that all dues would be cleared shortly.

Legal Action: When the insolvency petition came up before Justice G. Maheshwaran of the Madras High Court it was clear that this was no ordinary case. The courtroom was packed with harassed depositors who implored the judge to help them get back their money. Some flourished dud cheques which were passed on to the judge. Maheshwaran repeatedly told K.T. Pal Pandian, counsel for Vumidiar Bankers: "See, cheques for Rs 200 and Rs bounced. Naturally depositors are You must come out with some proposal to satisfy the depo Ultimately the judge ordered that an assignee be appointed.



Depositors outside the Vumidiar Bankers office: anxious wait

Pandian insists that the firm has than Rs 1.5 crore owing to it. He says: the firm is able to procure this it can pay up all due interest and matured de

Venkatraman, however, fears th firm will try to transfer its assets to a concern Vumidi Sarathy Jewellers. He to the interim report of the assignee says that the bankers did not give hi keys to all the rooms in their office pre

Whether Vumidiars will pay up still remains to be seen. Another firm went under recently, Sudarshan Chit F claimed before the Kerala High Court had vast amounts owing to it. Subseq newspaper reports, however, have that most of the outstandings were du other Sudarshan concerns. Even if V diars does eventually pay up, whole episode only underlines the need more stringent rules to curb non-ba financial institutions. —S.H. VENKATRA

THE MARKETS

Marking Time

FINANCE Minister Pranab Mukh must be wondering what it is th has done that the stock market sho so sour on him. Some businessmen expecting a higher deficit in the budg figure of Rs 2,500 crore has mentioned—but the Government is st red of inflation and keeping its fingers ssed. A higher deficit would have mea pumping of more money into the ec and would have helped sales and profits prospect of another tight money year to have unnerved the market and the prices are marking time.

Prices are way below the year's hi seem to have recovered somewhat fro year's low. The budget has disappointe business fraternity though the co sector is not doing too badly and will b large continue to fare well. Cement fertiliser shares are expected to do cularly well. The industry minister's ment that the Centre was considering increase in the ex-works retention and cement prices may be a pointer to goodies on the way. Companies that bine cement with fertiliser— Coromandel Fertilisers—stand to gain the new dispensation. This is not the however, for the spectacular rise in Cloth Mills—from 32 to 65 in less th months—which has a fertiliser unit, S

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S.H. VENKATRA

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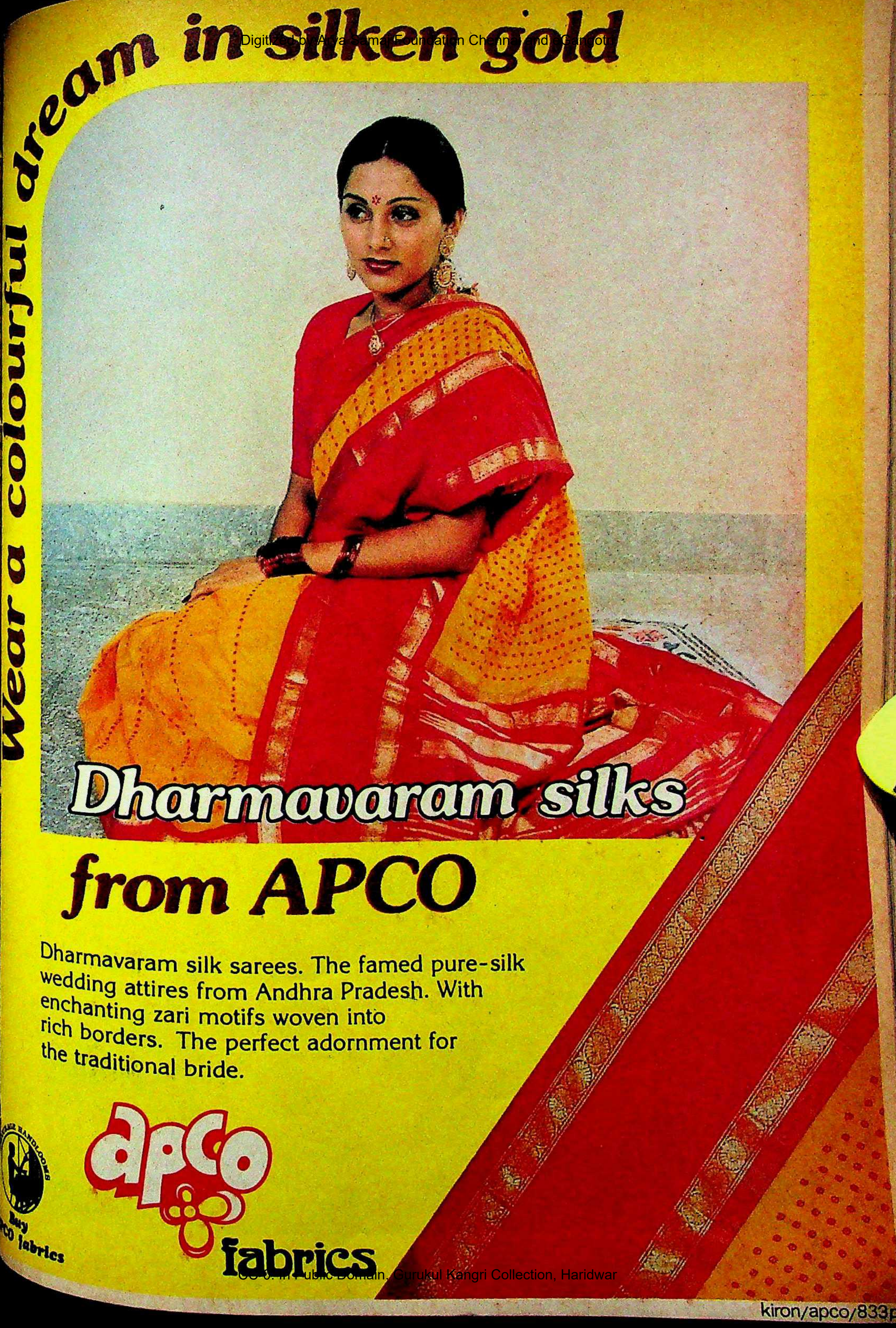
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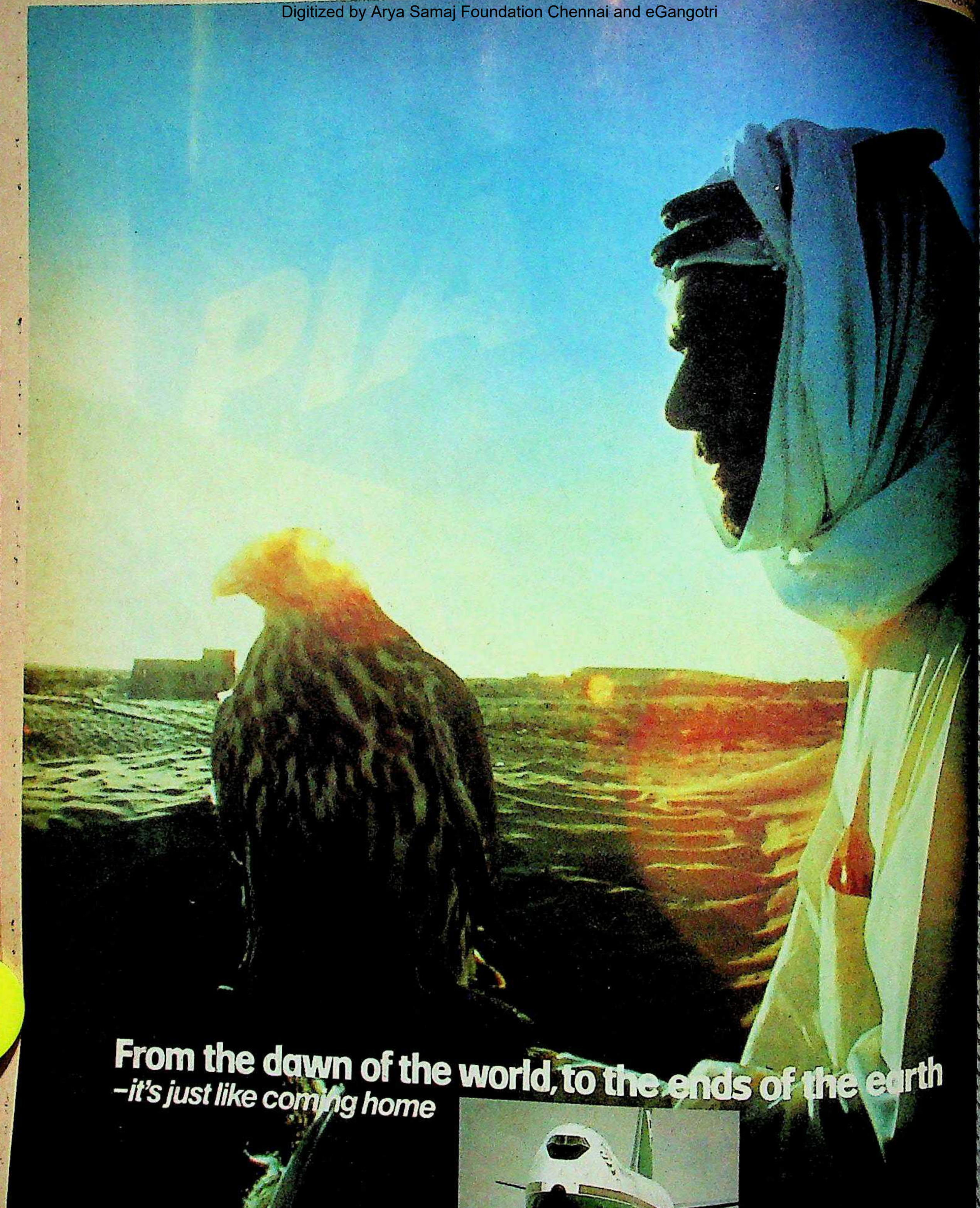
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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low 1983	Close 18.3.83	Change on Fortnight
Sarabhai	17.75	14.00	14.25	(0.25)
	36.50	31.55	32.75	(1.60)
	35.00	32.00	32.50	(1.00)
Cement	406.00	358.00	367.00	(3.00)
	1,200.00	1,025.00	1,070.00	20.00
	42.80	39.50	39.75	(0.75)
	257.00	218.00	218.00	(4.50)
Rayon	54.60	47.60	51.90	2.90
	75.00	57.50	65.00	(2.50)
Dyeing	28.20	27.20	27.70	(0.50)
	246.50	190.00	193.50	(13.50)
Mills	205.50	195.00	205.00	2.50
	810.00	695.00	762.50	(38.75)
Spinning	57.50	51.00	54.75	(1.75)
India	94.00	84.00	90.00	nil
Cloth Mills	65.75	32.31	65.75	13.00
India	23.70	20.10	23.70	1.50
India Hotels	22.00	20.75	20.75	(0.37)
	57.50	39.75	57.50	7.00
	31.50	23.00	23.00	(2.25)
Williams	21.75	19.10	19.50	(0.70)
Fertilisers	490.00	441.50	443.00	(13.00)
Rayon	52.00	45.00	47.00	(4.25)
Aluminium	38.75	32.10	36.20	(2.55)
Lever	56.50	53.00	53.50	(1.75)
Motors	35.10	28.70	30.30	(8.45)
Aluminium	20.00	17.40	18.00	(0.40)
Cable	23.00	21.80	22.10	0.10
Explosives	26.20	22.10	26.10	0.50
Organic	33.50	25.50	30.00	(2.00)
Oxygen	34.50	31.30	33.10	(0.90)
Rand	87.00	82.00	83.00	nil
	44.85	34.80	36.30	(1.20)
Tea	28.10	20.35	25.20	(1.80)
Synthetics	57.50	34.50	36.80	0.90
Engineering	85.00	68.00	74.00	(4.00)
	87.00	75.00	75.00	(9.00)
	65.40	57.30	64.00	3.60
Engineering	163.00	74.00	74.00	(9.00)
(Madras)	24.00	23.00	23.50	nil
& Toubro	57.50	53.00	53.50	(1.50)
Machines	60.25	42.50	52.75	1.00
Coats	22.60	18.00	18.00	(3.75)
& Mahindra	56.00	43.00	44.00	(4.50)
Rubber	26.19	22.69	24.2	(0.75)
Industries	257.50	240.00	241.25	(6.25)
Iron	24.00	20.00	20.25	(1.75)
	26.00	21.25	21.25	(1.75)
Organic	207.50	180.00	183.75	(1.25)
Paper	39.25	34.50	34.75	(4.25)
Electronics	47.10	41.00	42.60	0.70
Auto	29.25	27.50	27.75	(1.45)
Cooker	376.00	266.00	272.00	(34.00)
	32.00	27.50	29.00	(3.00)
	40.75	36.00	37.25	(2.25)
Rand	183.00	162.00	176.00	5.00
Wallace	22.25	19.00	19.87	nil
Fibres	39.05	33.20	38.00	0.40
	32.12	27.75	30.75	(0.06)
Products	17.50	15.25	15.80	(0.30)
Chemicals	46.80	39.50	40.25	(2.55)
Steel	67.00	54.00	56.50	(2.50)
	301.50	237.00	245.00	(4.50)
	455.00	373.00	374.00	(18.00)
Investments	45.00	38.60	40.75	(2.25)
Carbide	18.00	16.00	17.50	(0.40)
Black	25.10	23.00	24.00	(0.40)
Sperry	24.80	22.00	23.00	nil
	20.50	16.50	18.00	1.00
	283.00	262.00	271.00	5.00
	19.50	15.00	15.00	(0.50)
(sale)	26.00	22.40	25.60	0.20
	13.80	13.60	13.80	nil

Fertiliser, and is going in for a cement plant.

At the Bombay end, the textile strike may be lifted soon. This should pep up a market that has been in the doldrums for a long while and put a damper on many a Bombay-based industry. Companies which still have a foot in textiles but have otherwise diversified into other areas—Mafatlal, for instance—should be expected to perk up again.

Sudden Disruption: The marketmen are waiting to see if the finance minister is in a mood to give in to the pleas of trade and industry to withdraw or modify some of the harsh features of the budget like the new tax burden on the nil tax companies. These companies do their tax planning well in advance and draw up their expansion programmes accordingly. A sudden disruption in cash flow will not only upset their plans but those of other companies also, particularly companies making capital plant and machinery.

Larsen & Toubro is said to be one such company but the management has said that they can take the additional taxation in their stride. Telco may also be in the same boat, but it does affect the long-range development plans of these companies and through them those of a large segment of the corporate sector.

But many of these fears may be groundless, for, despite the setbacks on account of the budget, there is a ground swell of development activity over the entire range of the industrial sector and this should ultimately prevail as far as the share market is concerned. In addition, there is the considerable outlay on modernization, as companies take advantage of liberalised access to foreign exchange to make up for lost time. This aspect is reflected in the results of such companies as Hindustan Dorr-Oliver which supplies capital plant and machinery. The company's sales nearly doubled from Rs 14 crore to Rs 26 crore last year and the outlook for the current year is said to be equally hopeful. The current recession in the stock market should not therefore be looked upon as a serious break in the trend which by and large continues to be upward.

Certain sectors, however, may remain depressed for a long time, automobiles being one of them. The Maruti company is said to be ready to import 20,000 kits for assembly this year and some kits have already arrived. Once the programme gets going and the cars flood the market, the existing manufacturers may have to sit tight for a while and twiddle their thumbs. The only silver lining for such companies is that the Maruti cars will be rather dinky, not the type to suit corporate customers. But who knows what will happen when the cars really start rolling off the assembly lines?

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	8.7014	8.6000
Austria	100	As Sch	59.7611	59.0946
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.6018	26.5504
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.5424	41.2298
Canada	1	Can $	8.2061	8.0393
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.0580	11.9673
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4539	1.4303
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5091	1.4921
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4287	1.4180
Iran	100	Rial	11.8000	11.7112
Italy	100	It Lira	0.7000	0.6904
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.1822	4.1370
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7756	0.7697
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.2687	33.8766
Malaysia	1	Ml $	4.3725	4.3208
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.9039	0.8971
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7543	0.7487
Netherlands		D Glds	3.7843	3.7407
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7897	0.7837
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.7977	4.7405
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.5708	7.4828
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4388	0.4355
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3493	1.3315
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8699	4.8118
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0364	1.0286
Thailand	100	Baht	43.6037	43.2037
UK	1	Pound	14.9343	14.7973
USA	1	US $	10.0500	9.9125
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7287	2.7082
USSR	1	Rouble	13.7582	13.6543
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1975	4.1499

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 21.03.83.

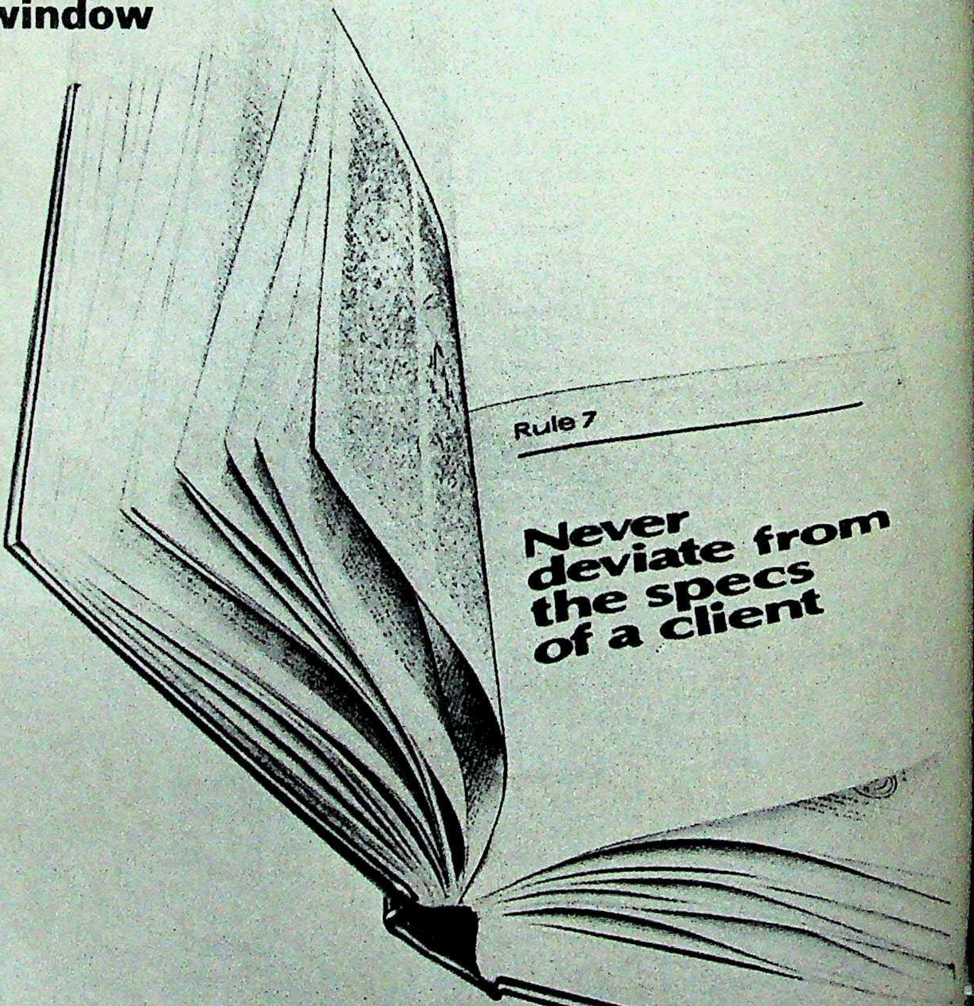
ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
PRICES		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
March 18, 1983	256.3	2.1
Cereals	275.8	9.0
Chemicals	359.5	5.9
Industrial Fibres	181.2	7.5
Metals	349.2	4.1
Sugar	193.7	4.7
Textile Yarns	219.3	0.8
Vegetable Oils	289.3	(12.9)
Gold, standard,		
March 19, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,770.00	(5.00)
Silver, .999		
March 19, 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,035.00	(255.00)
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
March 18, 1983	239.8	2.4
Cement	229.8	1.2
Chemicals	203.6	(1.6)
Engineering	414.9	22.1
Fertilisers	205.9	0.7
Man-made Fibres	368.7	(8.2)
Paper	453.5	(15.3)
Rubber Goods	157.8	(1.7)

MONEY	per cent
Money Supply, February 11, 1983	(0.1)
Bank Deposits	(0.4)
Foreign Exchange Assets	5.0

* 1969-70 = 100

KEC throws the rule book of customer relations out of the window


Rule 7
Never deviate from the specs of a client

Pratibha-83-50

ge as it may sound, our s at KEC and the total confidence customers derive in some e from our response to crises, es and failures.

a critical motor stops, very likely a many operations in a factory or a may come to a grinding halt. first concern is not to apportion but to put our motors or drives shape and to keep our er's set-up running.

e the Malaysian tin mine case, to st one example.

December 1972, KEC received an rom a major Malaysian customer, anted to replace two British W/8 poles' motors manufactured sh standards for pumping tin ore in his open cast mines.

Since the client's specifications were those of a standard KEC motor, we were able to supply the motors without any delay.

The order was so simple and straightforward, once the motors went into action we forgot all about them. But not for long. Within a couple of years, complaints about the motors started trickling in. What could have gone wrong? We checked up on the specs. We were dead on. We had stuck to the minutest detail.

There was no point guessing the cause of the problem from across thousands of miles. We put one of our ace troubleshooters on the job and sent him to the site.

Electric motors or drives don't work in isolation. They are part of a total system. They must be designed to match not only the other components of the system, but all the peculiar environmental stresses and strains that the system is subjected to.

Once on the spot, our man discovered that the pumps powered by our motors were lowered and raised by a chain. Often during this operation, the chain would smash into the cast-iron body of the motor and damage it. At times the solid particles in the slurry would stall the pump, thus ruining the coils of the motor, since the circuit breakers were ineffective. Further, the whole pump was hung from the bottom flange of the motor, as against the motor being supported on the pump skirt in a normal case. In addition, the thrust bearing in the motor was required to carry thrust load and rotation weights of the pump over and above the rotating weights of the motor rotor. The nature of stress on the motor was thus exactly opposite to that on a normal motor.

Once the problem was identified, we got cracking. What was required was a totally fresh set of specs. Among the major changes that we made, the two most important were: 1) a fabricated steel body and end shield with an opening covered by a cowling. And 2) bar windings for both stators and rotors.

And the result? These changes in the original specs were so effective that today we have over 200 motors working successfully at the same job in the Malaysian open cast mines.

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energy
to serve
the millions

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Thanks to our sophisticated technological expertise, our capacity to take on new challenges and the fact that we never abandon our customers or products, KEC is today one of the leading manufacturers of AC, DC machines in South-east Asia, making over 80,000 motors and generators a year. KEC also produces electronic equipment and systems, AC and DC controls, geared motors and transformers. Our machines are in use in almost every conceivable industry. In India and in over 20 countries of the world including the U.K., U.S.A. and Canada.

PERSPECTIVE BY BHABANI SEN GUPTA

NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

The Rails Of Reality

> *Let us honour if we can*
> *The vertical man*
> *Though we value none*
> *But the horizontal one.*
> —W.H. AUDEN, Epigraph For Poems.

AT AGE 66, Indira Gandhi has risen, to standing ovation of one-half of mankind, as a vertical leader of a horizontal movement known as non-alignment. Mesmerised by the glitter of the 7th Non-aligned Summit in Delhi, numerous people in India and abroad have cast her in the role of a world leader at a time when she appears to be fast losing her grip on the tide of events in her own country, India, which she has ruled, with only a brief interruption, for 14 years. Non-alignment in the world of the '80s is at best a circumambulatory aphrodisiac divinely subsidised to provoke the developing nations into a rising birth rate of golden dreams and purple expectations. The documents adopted at the Delhi summit are densely populated with proposals, programmes, action-plans, exhortations and appeals emanating from the dreams and expectations of more than 100 nations.

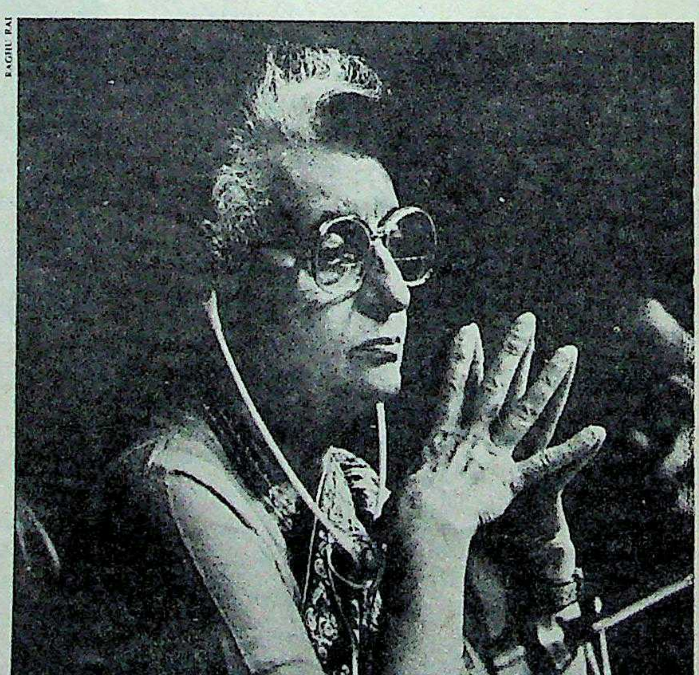
As 'leader' of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) for three years, or its "locomotive"—a phrase coined by Fidel Castro and accepted by Mrs Gandhi—she is expected not only to keep the movement "on the right track", but to coax out of a darkly intransigent world a harvest of economic and political crops which the 'landlords' of the North are not prepared to yield, nor are the 'peasants' of the South willing to wrest from their clasp. Indeed, there is little that Mrs Gandhi can deliver in the next three years as chairperson of NAM; whatever locomotion she is able to summon will not push the movement very far on the "right track", whatever that may mean. If one were to ask Indira Gandhi today, when the gala event of March has already dimmed to a flicker in non-aligned memory, what kind of world 'leadership' role she thinks she is going to play, she will probably reply, in the words of the old lady quoted by E.M. Forster, "How can I say I know what I think till I see what I say?"

Platitudes: A lot of people, however, have said a lot of things on her behalf, mostly without her leave. In this loud-talking milieu, it is not easy to find a longitude amidst a welter of platitudes. The summit documents themselves have no fine print. The compactness of languag and structure one could see in the Indian drafts was violently assaulted by long additions with which the final fat and flabby resolutions from the not very cohesive drafting committees. To utopias of many hues bubbling up in myriad non-aligned and to bring incompatibles together in order to keep alive the gy of consensus, too many tasks have been assigned to NAM next three years, and, by the grace of the mass media, to its son. Those who put together these strings of tasks and roles, ring till the small hours of three mornings, might as well hav unaware for the moment that the history of NAM is repl non-implementation of resolutions as much by the non-align the aligned.

Coming down from the dizzy heights of the desirable to earth of the possible, the first thing that needs to be made clear there has never been, nor is there now, any 'leadership, of there is no question of India or Mrs Gandhi 'leading' or 'd the movement till 1986. NAM has been left deliberately uninstit lised; the only 'regular' body it has set up in 22 years is the Co- ting Bureau. This body has now been thoughtlessly expanded clude 66 members, making it a mirror of the incohesiveness compatibilities that make NAM a fascinating study of historic that unavoidably form between international institutions or ments and changed, and changing, world realities.

If the international institutions and alliances born out of War II have lost their inner vitality and have become barricade new world economic or order, hasn't non-alig born of the historic w anti-imperialism (or dec sation, if you prefer) also its inner dynamism in an which the polarisation is n tween imperialism vs co and semicolonies, but, e ially, between the rich a privileged, on the one ha the poor and the depri the other, simultaneously international, regional a mestic levels? At the p level, the Delhi summit or precisely, its interpreters, Mrs Gandhi to drive the bling train of NAM s neously on four "co tracks: the unpeaceful tr national liberation (a name for anti-imperialism unbuilt track of a new i tional economic order; a scovered track of conf lution in the non-aligned itself and the nearly track of nuclear arms and disarmament—of by the great powers.

Complex Tasks: Th much more. Indira Ga expected to take "an i



RAGHU RAI

Mrs Gandhi at the Summit: down from the heights war between Iran and Iraq. To nudge Pakistan and Afghaagree, with the good offices of the UN mediator, to a compolitical settlement of the Afghan crisis. To ensure that and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) their Delhi 'agreement' to start a dialogue to resolve the ean issue.

will be expected to persuade the Reagan Administration not in domestic affairs of Central American states torn by between US-backed repressive reactionary regimes and guerrillas often led by leftists and helped by Cuba and the To help in a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle ich would get the Palestinians their long-cherished national not a sovereign Palestinian state. To persuade the intercommunity to set up a "war crimes tribunal" to try Israel for crimes against Palestinians in Lebanon.

is expected to make the superpowers heed the Delhi summit end the disastrous drift ear war; to convince they must begin to She is to demonstrate of her own ringing on: "Non-alignment is largest peace moveby meshing NAM with movement in Europe rica. (There is, alas, no movement in the noncountries, a dozen of engaged in "periphe). Mrs Gandhi is also for the "successful of the UN-sponsored to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. This conhas been twice postponed because of US refusal to attend, scheduled to be held next year in Colombo, with abno certainty that the US will be there.

"Indira Gandhi will find the world too intransigent to listen to the voice of the Delhi summit...If the regional conflicts bend towards resolution it will not be before the warring nations realise how wastefully they are spending their scarce resource and short political strength without achieving their goals."

THE economic field, the demands on Mrs Gandhi are no less ing. She is expected to head a committee of non-aligned to contact leaders of a select number of developed counimplement the two-phase strategy outlined at the Delhi to strive for a new international economic order. In the first there is to be a conference within the UN early next year to set king group to pave the way for global negotiations with the of the North.

is also to be an international conference of all countries, members of the Soviet bloc and China, to radically restrucinternational monetary and financial institutions set up at on Woods conference of 1945. As chairperson of NAM, Mrs forbidden either to convene or to attend a second Cancuneting of carefully chosen members of the South and leading of the North. She is to bring about visible progress in timeprogrammes of South-South cooperation. As if the load is too overwhelming, there is also before her a string of proposals.

instance, Madagascar has proposed that there should be a conference of non-aligned countries at Tananarive to discuss Ocean and that littoral countries should enter into consulto draw up an international convention on the Indian Ocean. before her three specific proposals made by Pakistan: there be a "Development Security Council", a kind of institutionaancun; a Third World secretariat should service a non-aligned summit to be attended by heads of government or state and ance ministers; and thirdly, a committee of top experts of the orld should bring out an authoritative annual report on the state of the economy of the developing nations—a parallel to the annual report of the World Bank. And so on.

Myriad Plans: The only action that Mrs Gandhi has taken so far is that she has composed a letter, and has despatched it to the leaders of the great powers bringing to their notice the New Delhi Appeal and urging nuclear arms control and disarmament. Next month she will attend a preparatory meeting of the Group of 77 (G-77) at Buenos Aires, Argentina, to prepare for UNCTAD-VI to be held in Belgrade next June. She will also attend the 1984 session of the UN General Assembly to submit to the world body the NAM chairperson's report on the Delhi summit. She is expected by the summit to request world leaders like Ronald Reagan, Yuri Andropov, the prime ministers of China, West Germany and Britain and the president of France to attend that session. Whether the aim will be to thereby convene a world summit at the UN is not clear. What is clear, however, is that the world leaders will not assemble at the UN on summons from the chairperson of NAM. They have never done so before. There is even less reason why they should do so now.

To keep NAM on the correct track of supporting national liberation struggles (an essential qualification of non-alignment prescribed at Belgrade) Mrs Gandhi would alienate the US and its allies because these struggles are now being fought mainly in Central America and Southern Africa.

By pressing for global negotiations, she will not only get a stony refusal from the United States but also, very probably, negative response from OPEC which blandly rejected a proposal at the summit to set up a Third World Bank. It is difficult to imagine how she can induce the non-aligned countries to implement the 8-point pledge proclaimed at Delhi for South-South cooperation. Eight years ago at Lima, non-aligned foreign ministers had decided to set up a Fund for Economic and Social Development. There is no sign of it yet.

Distant Goals: In short, Indira Gandhi will find the world too intransigent to listen to the voice of the Delhi summit. The great virtue of non-alignment which has kept the movement alive and going is that few non-aligned nations have followed up the lofty proposals adopted at successive summits. If the regional conflicts bend towards resolution it will not be before the warring nations realise how wastefully they are spending their scarce resource and short political strength without achieving their goals.

It is somewhat sad that a custom-made role of world leadership should come to Indira Gandhi—in fact, thrust upon her—so late in her life and in a world where non-alignment has ceased to be a seminal chemistry of change. Her father's role will thus be denied to her for no particular fault of her own except that she has not so far seen herself as a world stateswoman nor given evidence of a lofty world vision. It is also a moot question whether political, economic and social convulsions at home will leave Mrs Gandhi with much time or sang-froid to locomotion NAM.

For the time being, however, her chairpersonship of NAM seems to have pleased everybody all over the world except the Reagan White House which has recorded its mild displeasure at the "unbalanced" tone of the Delhi documents and has unilaterally proclaimed a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the seas laced by its coasts in disregard of the Law of the Sea Treaty, one of the principal achievements of NAM at the UN, which the US has refused to sign. If this is a heart-lift for her and for India, let it last as long as it lasts.

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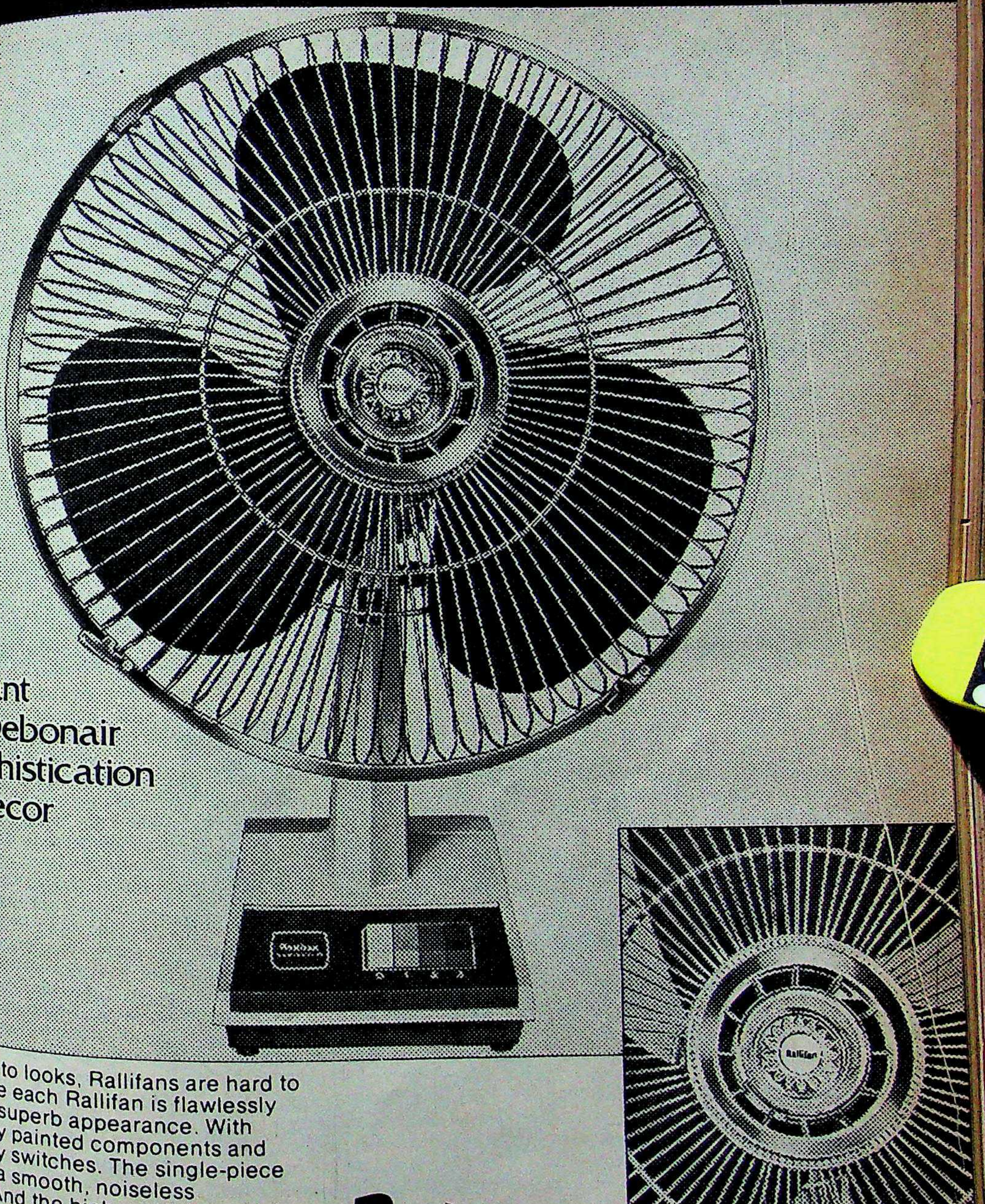

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ALLAHABAD UNIVERSITY

Chaos On Campus

IF EVER there was a campus in crisis, it is Allahabad University. On March 12, Vice-Chancellor Udit Narayan Singh resigned in protest against the state Government's decision to appoint an IAS officer to probe "serious allegations of abuse of official position and authority, discrimination against the rusticated students in the matter of withdrawal of their expulsion orders and wrongful dismissal of an employee". Calling the inquiry "an outrageous violation of university autonomy", Singh maintained that there had been no discrimination against either the employee—night watchman Ram Gopal, dismissed last year for "dereliction of duty and misbehaviour"—or against the students—Kamlesh Tiwari, Shyam Prakash Goswami and Kamal Singh Yadav—rusticated during the 1980-81 academic session for "gross misconduct, indulging in violence and misbehaviour and cases of breach of discipline."

Singh: protest resignation

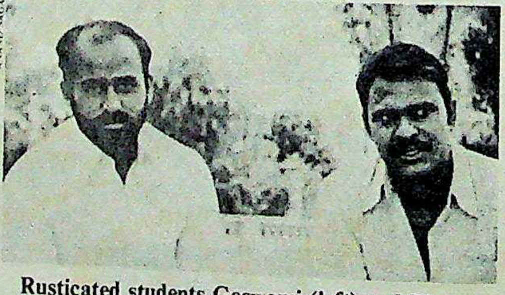
Singh's resignation was immediately followed by that of the entire 16-member board of proctors, leading to a virtual collapse of administration on the troubled campus. Three teachers were assaulted and had to be hospitalised. The violence was nothing unusual: earlier last month, the dean's office, the arts faculty, the office of correspondence courses, a room in the Senate House and a room in the Physics Department had been set on fire. Singh charged after his resignation, which came only weeks before he was to retire on May 12, 1983, that the inquiry by a bureaucrat would only put a "premium on vandalism and hooliganism on the campus".

Rusticated Students: Tiwari, Goswami and Yadav had been found guilty of demolishing the foundation-stone structure of the Ancient History Department Museum and assaulting students of that department. They later abused a female member of the faculty on campus and also went to the vice-chancellor's office where they abused him and flung a slipper in his face. Following this, they were rusticated, initially for four years. Tiwari and Goswami moved applications seeking revocation of their expulsion order but both the Governor C.P.N. Singh and the Allahabad High Court rejected their appeal.

The Allahabad University Teachers' Association (AUTA) also passed a unanimous resolution banning the readmission of these students to any course in the future and suggested that their degrees be withdrawn. This provoked widespread arson and violence by a group of students who supported the expelled students.

But despite all the trouble on campus, the state Government's interference has not been appreciated by the university staff. Said Devki Nandan Dwivedi, proctor of the university: "The Government . . . has no jurisdiction or moral right whatsoever to intervene in internal matters of campus discipline." He felt that the Government's decision to set up an inquiry was on "utterly baseless" allegations.

Rare Case: Dwivedi clarified that the only such withdrawal was made in the case of Anil Singh Parihar, an undergraduate Arts' student, who was expelled in 1971 on charges of resorting to violence in an examination. Ten years later, when Parihar, who had been rusticated forever, applied for a review while seeking admission to an Urdu diploma course, a special AUTA screening committee decided, to take him back on one-year probation. After his conduct was found satisfactory, he was permitted to continue his studies.



Rusticated students Goswami (left) and Tiwari

Unconvinced by the Parihar case rationale and despite existing facts, Tiwari and Goswami argued that there were other cases of "open discrimination". Vivek Kumar Singh, a post-graduate student of Hindi and a resident of Holland Hall was suspended on a complaint of violent misbehaviour lodged by his hostel warden. He was readmitted only after the complaint had been withdrawn. Rustication orders against Subhash Rai, a post-graduate history student were never withdrawn. He regained admission by submitting forged papers under a false name, only to be expelled when he was discovered five months later. Rustication orders against Narain Singh, who had been expelled along with Parihar, were never withdrawn
has not been readmitted. Rustication
agaisnt Shyam Gopal Pandey of B.A.
year, Rakesh Srivastava of LL.B. first
Prabhakar Bhatt of M.A. final year
Chandra Narain Tripathi of M.A. fin
who were expelled for assaulting
Prasad Tripathi, a lecturer in politi
nce; were never withdrawn and th
not been readmitted.

Old Conflict: Commenting on th
flict between the state Government
"battling dons" of Allahabad Uni
Shyam K. Seth, present AUTA preside
ted out that "hostilities were trigge
way back in 1981 when a chancellor's
has set ablaze one of the most bitter
versies in the state's academic history
signed order from the chancellor, date
tember 17, 1981, had quashed the exa
tion results cancellation of one of 1,
didates charged and punished for the
unfair means in a university exami
Seth said that the issue had undo
been politicised and motivated beca
candidate involved was Shailendra K
the son of Dharam Vir, a Congress(I)
Sabha MP and Union minister of st
labour. A writ petition was moved in
lahabad High Court on behalf of the
The court passed strictures favour
university's decision and though
chancellor's order was not set aside,
ted suggestion was made for a rec
ration by the chancellor "if he so thi

Banwari Lal Sharma, former
president said that the Govern
stance in the present affair was "
ful", especially since it was d
against a man such as Vice-Cha
Singh, who had been trying his b
check the falling standards, the
pread hooliganism and violen
campus and the farcical examinati
tem, all of which have been threat
destroy the academic worth and cr
ty of the university. Sivesh Bhatta
a reader in ancient history and a m
of the AUTA, cautioned: "It's time
the rot, if at all the Government and E
tion Minister Swarup Rani Bakshi a
rious about improving the deteriorati
dition of our university campuses." H
ver, other faculty members were less h
and doubted whether the IAS officer w
able to submit an impartial report.

Mahesh Chandra Chattopadhya
ior faculty member, voiced the hope
university faculty when he said that th
situation would be when "our auto
not further undermined and both po
and the Government . . . keep their h
the campus. Only then will we be a
restore the lost glory of our universi

—ANAND SAGAR in A

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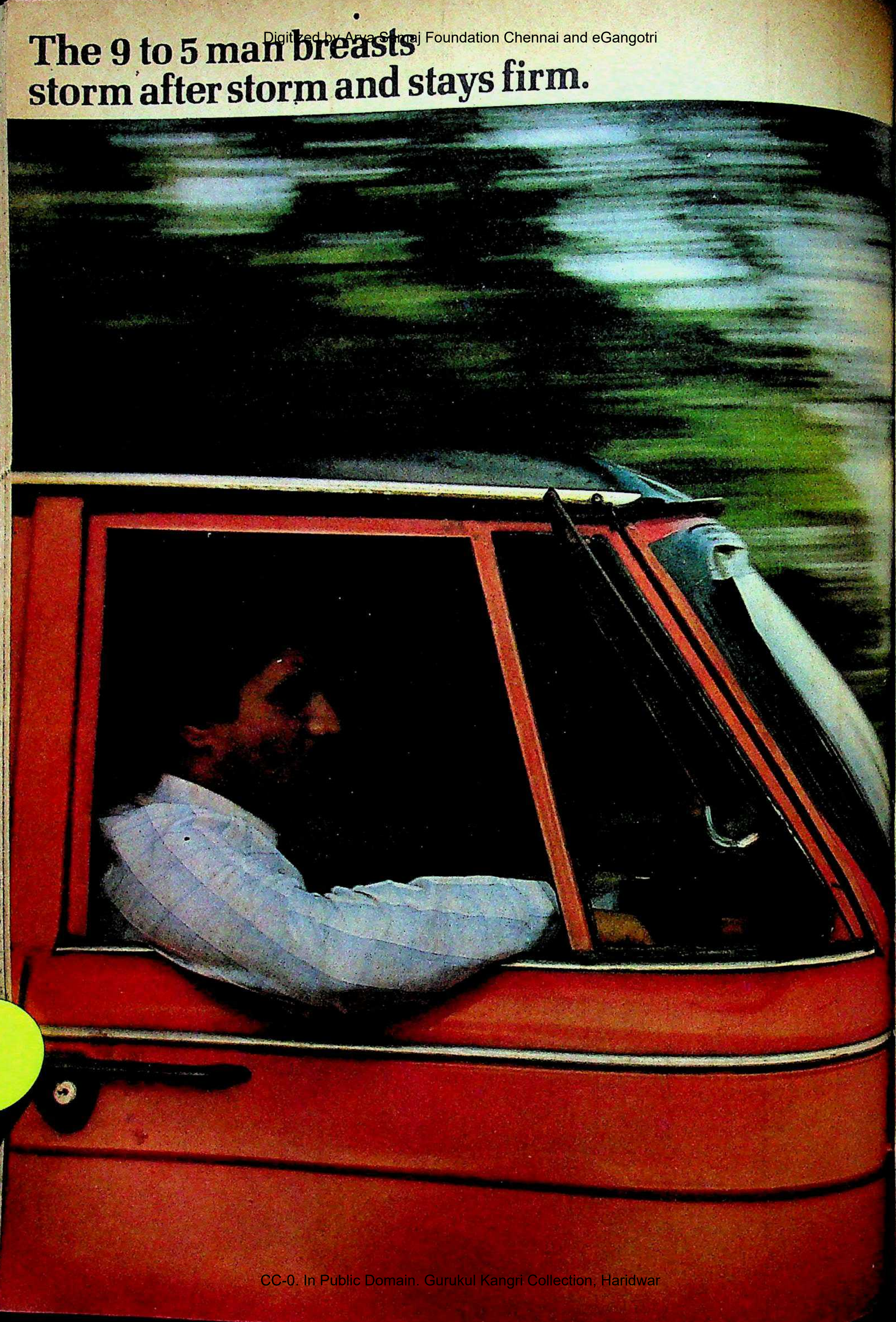
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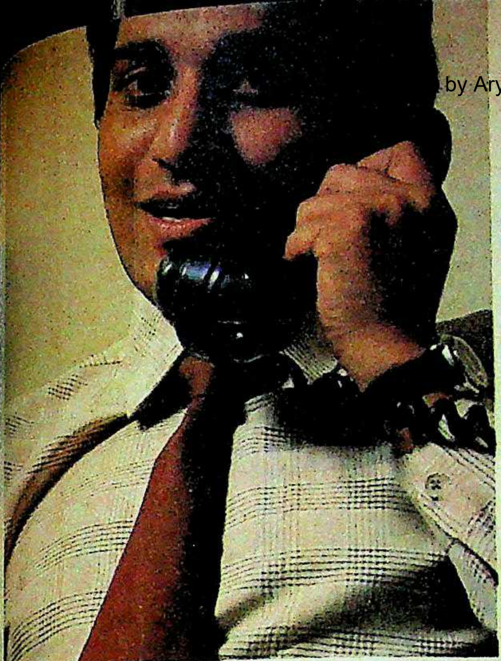

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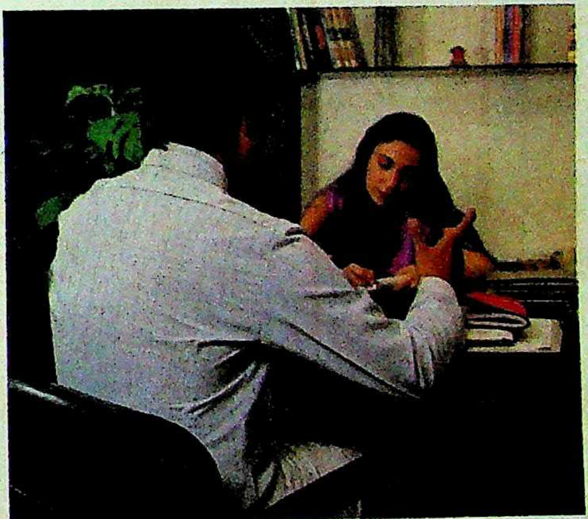

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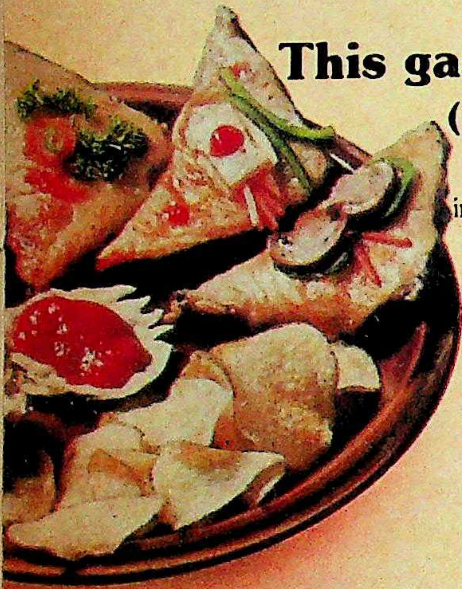

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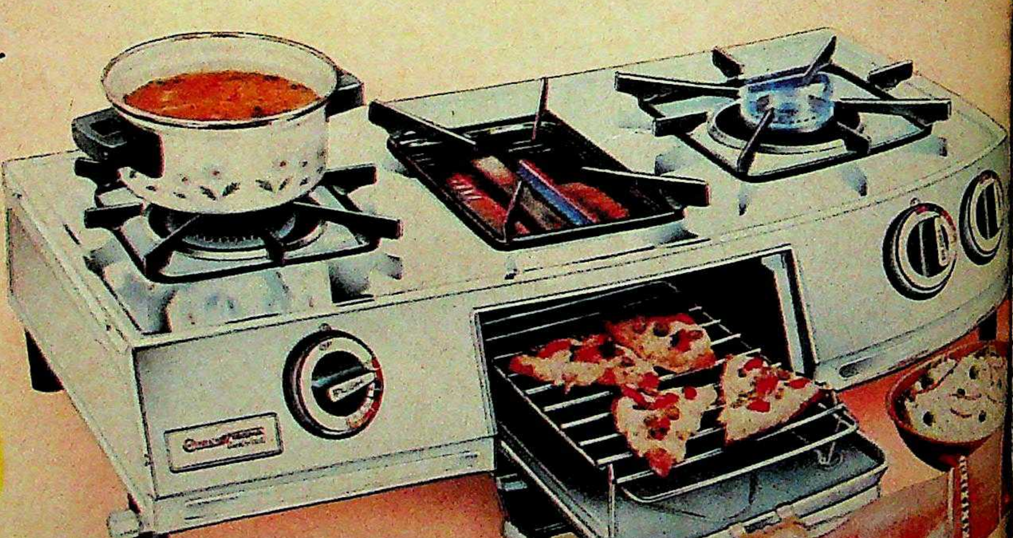

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C MUSIC

mposer Conundrum

NSEEMLY little row has disrup- d the cosy little world of Carnatic usic. The controversy surrounds century maharaja of erstwhile Tra- ate, Swati Thirunal, who has come gnised as one of the leading com- f the last century. Now a veritable yal has erupted about whether actually composed the 400-odd ributed to him.

controversy began after K.P. Siva- leading veena maestro, he had proof that Thiru- not write the com- s himself. Instead, he ey were written by Vadi- o was one of the famous r quartet of musicians st century. The quartet n Trivandrum for a long der the patronage of the a of Travancore. Later the brothers returned to r but Vadivelu stayed avancore and became an ble companion of al.

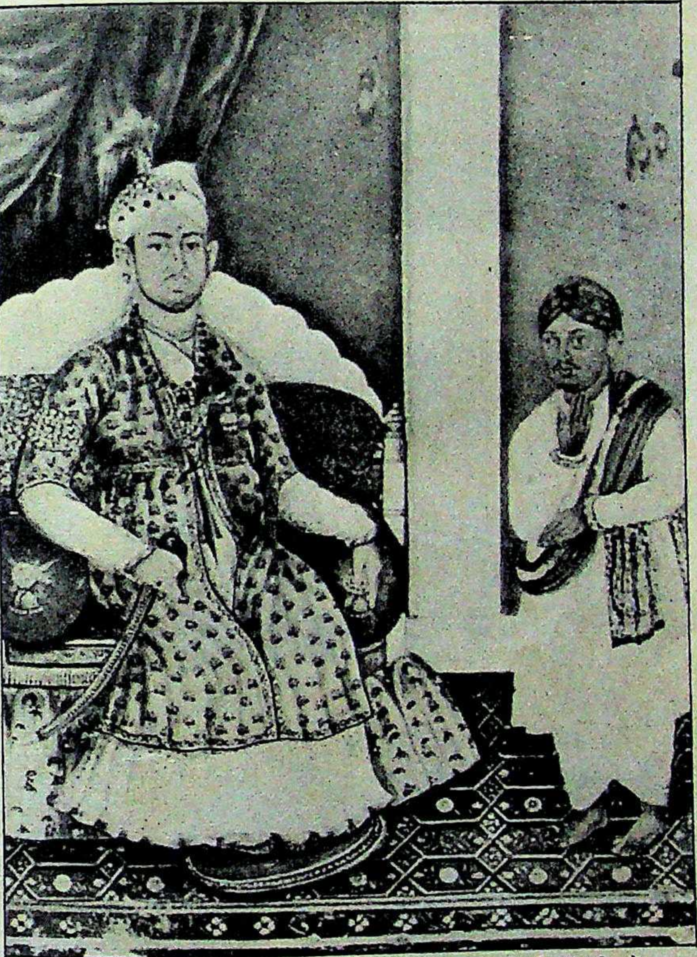
satile Monarch: The man entre of the dispute—Thirunal—lived between 47 and was a patron of nd a versatile composer. e 18 languages and wrote gs in Sanskrit, Hindu- Telugu, Malayalam and Nearly half of these are d to be *kirtans* composed cial prayer form in Sans-

t it was only early this long after his death that 's reputation really me like veteran musi- Professor S. Rama- say this was because was a king and couldn't e his musical compo- rough a lineage of dis- hich other composers could do. ould have been something incon- bout a king playing a court artiste ”

andam who is a descendant of u has mustered a number of argu- o back his claim. He says he has the palm leaf manuscripts of Vadivelu's *padavarnams*. The Sanskrit songs ed to Thirunal are merely transla- f Vadivelu's Telugu compositions. andam: "Swati Thirunal could, at best, be only credited with having been a translator but even that is doubtful. I think even the translations were made by Vadivelu, because the handwriting on the palm leaf manuscripts on which the Sanskrit songs have been inscribed is the same as in Vadivelu's Telugu inscriptions."

To settle the matter Sivanandam suggests that the documents in his possession should be compared with others with the Music Academy. He advises: "Why not get a handwriting expert to examine the documents in my possession and those with the academy and decide the matter?"

Most experts do not accept that the handwriting argument is conclusive. Says Ramanathan: "A similarity of handwriting even if established, will not prove anything. Thirunal could have engaged his court composer Vadivelu to inscribe his own compositions on palm leaves. Ramanathan counters Sivanandam's argument by asking: "Let us leave out the so-called *padavarnams* for which both Telugu and Sanskrit compositions are available. Can Sivanandam cull out Vadivelu's Telugu equivalents for Thirunal's *kirtans* which are sung during the Navaratri festival?"


R. SHRIDHAR

Swati Thirunal (left) and Vadivelu: musical whodunit

Liberal Patronage: Another veena maestro S. Balachander takes a line between these two extreme views. Says Balachander: "I don't say that Thirunal did not compose even a single song. But most of the musical compositions that are attributed to him were not authored by him at all. But Thirunal's image has been boosted out of all proportions because most of the established musicians ruling the Carnatic roost today have enjoyed, at one time or the other, the liberal patronage of the Travancore royal family."

One way or the other, the activities of the Travancore royal family appear to have influenced the controversy. Balachander says that it is an "open secret that Thirunal's portrait was hung up in the Music Academy in Madras because the institution received lavish donations from the Travancore family". But musicians in the pro-Thirunal camp insist that the people who have raised doubts about Thirunal's musical talents are the men who have been boycotted by the Travancore royal family. Says T.K. Murthy, a famous mridangist: "Sivanandam, Balachander and Balasaraswathi are all established artistes who have been conspicuous by their absence from musical performances at the Travancore Palace."

Murthy also claims that there was friction between Sivanandam's father and the Travancore maharajas. But as the welter of charges and counter-charges fly back and forth there is no sign that the dispute is anywhere near settled. On the contrary it looks as if the two sides are girding for a prolonged battle over the authenticity of the musical compositions.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

Ramanathan (left) and Balachander: differing views

EXHIBITION

Classics In Bronze

WHEN the United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and his wife visited New Delhi's National Museum last month, one was overheard remarking to the other as they left about how dirty the showcases inside were. Such impressions of the country's premier institution for displaying Indian art and antiquity have persisted: behind the impressive red sandstone facade of the museum lie a warren of poorly tended, and even more poorly lit, galleries, chock-a-block full of the finest examples of Indian art that continue to gather the dust of the 20th century. "Bulbs fused," croaks an ancient attendant in the Ancient India section when conscientious visitors peering around in the dark timidly request him to turn on the lights.

Perhaps it was to dispel this longstanding view of the National Museum as something of a write-off that the powers-that-be (in this case, the Education Ministry's Department of Culture, the Archa Survey of India and the National M have cranked themselves into serio In honour of the Seventh Non-alig mit, they have put together a show t shows, that is not only painstaking gether but presented in so profe manner that it easily competes with of art shows anywhere in the world

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PICTURES BY RAGHU RAI

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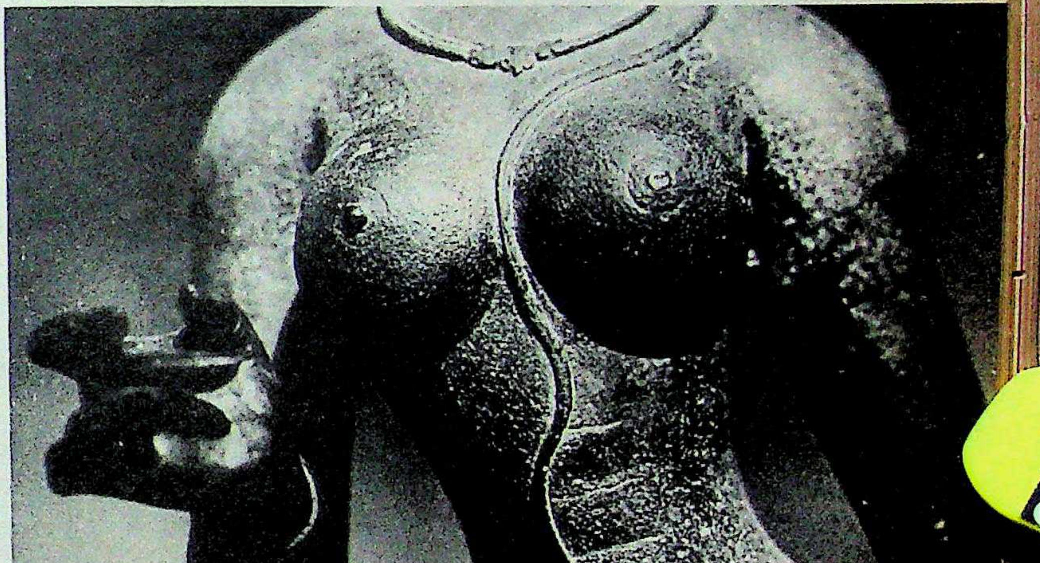
ened by spiritual benignity. Rarely has sculpture achieved a better combination of beauty and power."

Easily over half of the collection consist of images of Shiva—Shiva in many of his most popular manifestations, as creator, sustainer, dispeller of ignorance, granter of solace and, finally, destroyer—in the five essential acts that lead to his governance of human life, and breed the Shaivite cult of worship. Says Dr R. Nagaswamy, director of the Archaeological Survey, who has been instrumental in organising the show and writing the catalogue that accompanies it: Lord Shiva is seen as creator and destroyer both, destruction being recognised in the Saiva Siddhanta as not only the end but also the beginning. In his manifestation as Nataraja, for example, his is the dance that destroys all, but it is also the dance of knowledge and above all the dance of bliss."

Half a dozen of the finest and oldest Nataraja icons ever seen—standing from about 70 to 120 cm in height—are on display; so are images of Shiva in his manifestation known as Tripurantaka, in which he set out to destroy three cities inhabited by demons; as Vrishavahana in which he is portrayed leaning on his vehicle, the bull; in the pose known as Somaskanda, where he appears seated in peace, benediction and domestic bliss, accompanied by his consort Parvati and their child Skanda; and as Chandrasekhara, a manifestation of him as the ideal husband, fondly embracing his consort Parvati.



A general view (left) of the elegantly spotlit exhibition of bronzes and (above) a detail of an exquisitely-modelled Parvati of the early Chola period

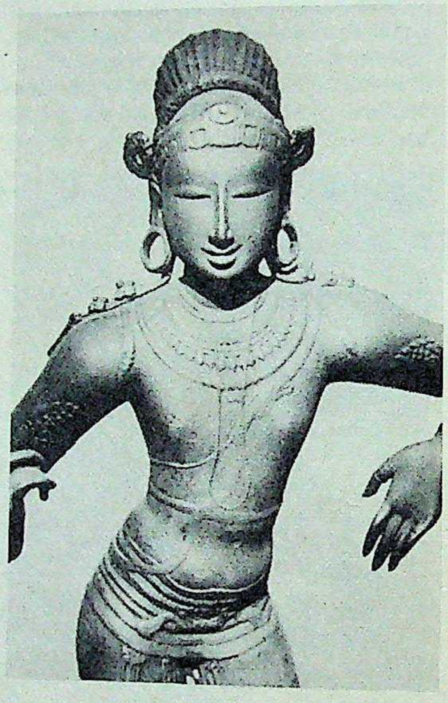
Artistic Perfection: Ranging from manifestations of Shiva as the supreme destroyer, breathing fire in his war against evil, to completely domestic portraits as a husband and father, there is one aspect of Shiva on display that, historians argue, remains a unique find in its artistic perfection and rarity. This is the manifestation of Shiva known as the Kalyanasundara, which Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, additional secretary, Department of Culture, who originated the idea of the exhibition together with Nagaswamy, considers the most outstanding piece of the show. "This," she says, "could by singled out as an image which will not only bring great joy and delight to all those who see it, but will open up new vistas of historical exploration and art analysis."

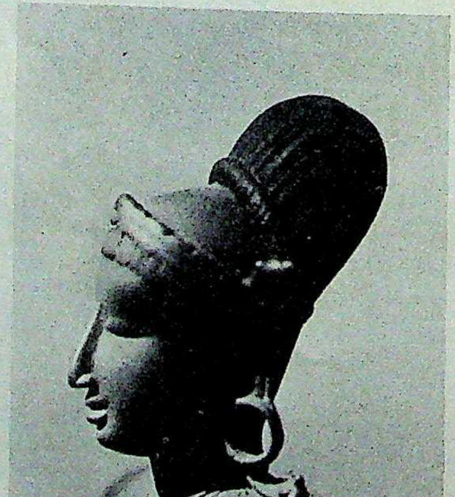
Placed in a glass case in the centre of the gallery, the Kalyanasundara Shiva is a composition 90 cm high, weighing about 80 kg that shows the marriage of Shiva to Parvati. One of the oldest pieces on display (it is dated from the later Pallava period, around A.D. 875), the wedding scene has been borrowed from the Chidambaresvarar Temple in the town of Vadakkalattur in Thanjavur district.

The composition's colours of classic bronze, a subtle golden-brown, are heightened by its ornamental detail of the two deities. Their jewels, extravagant hairstyles, clothes, and most of all their stance as they stand hand in hand, drive art scholars into paroxyms of ecstasy. Says Nagaswamy about the piece: "Shiva is here presented as a figure of great majesty, supple young and calm; Parvati, on the other hand, is bashful, tender and suffused by emotion..... The divine Kalyanasundara in his wedding dress and ornaments and the delightful pose of taking to himself a bride has nowhere been rendered, whether in stone or metal, with such consummate ease and such masterly understanding of the mood of the theme as in this great image from Vadakkalattur."

Aside from the great Shiva bronzes, the National Museum exhibition presents a whole pantheon of Indian deities: one section is devoted to several images of Parvati, another to superbly-crafted images of Ganesh, to the Sun God Surya, Vishnu, Shiva's leading disciples during the Chola age such as Sundaramurti, and there is even a large bronze cast of Shiva's vehicle Nandi the bull—its lolling tongue, large saucer-like eyes and endearing proportions elevating it to the level of a comical masterpiece. The cult of Krishna is also celebrated with the delicately-cast and perfectly-balanced bronze of the Kaliya Krishna—or the young Krishna subduing the serpent Kaliya by dancing on its five-hooded head—belonging to the early Chola period (A.D. 950), a piece so fine that last year it was one of the leading Indian *objets* transported to London to be shown at the "In the Image of Man" exhibition as part of the Festival of India.

Compelling Masterpieces: Compelling though the bronzes are for their visual and aesthetic beauty, the lay visitor may still want to know who these masterpieces were created for, why they are considered masterly and how they were made. Obviously, all were made as objects of worship, or to commemorate the lives of great living and mythical beings. They were made for kings to be





Two views of the same bronze of Sundara Murti, Chola period disciple of Shiva

generally donated to shrines
where they were dressed in
jewels and clothing and often
ceremonial processions.

Although metal sculpture
known in most parts of India sinc
Valley civilisation, it was during
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intó a dazzling renaissance. In the
eighth centuries, Pallava emp
Mahendravarman I and Raja
great patrons of art, building
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the Chola dynasty displaced the
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From the time of the early
perors Aditya and Parantaka in
and 10th centuries, bronze image
and Nataraja are on show.

Followed by the Chola Q
biyan Mahadevi, who it is known
wed early, and spent much of
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instituting endowments, the age
bronzes reached its apogee during
of Rajaraja Chola (985–1014 A.D.
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arts and built the big temple of T
His personal attention to every
temple life is spelled out in his
which also refer to the consecration
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Metal images made for temples
solid, except their mounts, which
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which first a wax model of the
prepared with every detail embel
then coated in clay before the mol
poured in. The precision of the
of the image, its poses or the emb
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treatises known as *Agamas* and al
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images were generally made of
though at a later stage an alloy co
of five metals (copper, silver, gold,
zinc) known as *panchaloha*, becam
The five metals were supposed to
the five elements of earth, water,
ether, metaphysically denoting the
God pervades all matter.

Prized Pieces: Most of the br
lected for the exhibition are not
any more, many of them having
doned because of mutilations an
caused by their great age. Still fewer
as Dr Vatsyayan points out, were
even to scholars and art historian
remained hidden in dark corners
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of 1972 when all art objects over
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ical Survey, that their wherea-
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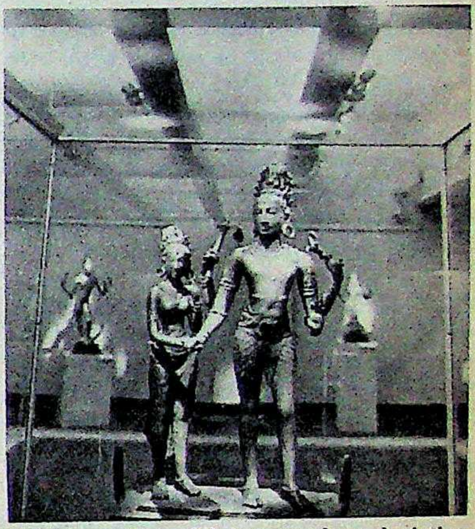
repeated visits by scholars like
y and Vatsyayan to village te-
maths (religious trusts) and much
persuasion to be able to borrow
s for public display. Once per-
Hindu Religious and Charitable
Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu, the Thanjavur Art Gallery, the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology and the Madras Museum all agreed to loan their most prized pieces.

Transporting and displaying them was a major exercise. The 67 pieces brought from south India were first assembled in Madras, where each was packed in layers of tissue, surgical cotton, cotton padding, coir and thermocole before being flown to Delhi in a special Defence Ministry plane. Special security measures in the gallery they are displayed in include a round-the-clock patrol of 25 Central Reserve Police guards besides the regular staff of museum watchmen. Four closed-circuit television cameras, placed at vantage positions in the gallery, faithfully record the movements of the visitors circulating through; and a host of other electronic gadgets such as ultrasonic detectors, infrared beams, special window protectors and door switches fortify the security vigil.

Two of the large selection of Natarajas on display at the exhibition



The composition of Kalyanasundara, depicting the marriage of Shiva

Special effects were also undertaken for the display arrangements. For almost the first time the museum made such elaborate and expensive lighting arrangements. Each piece is cleverly spotlit from a total of 124 trained spotlights along the ceiling, each equipped with American bulbs of a varying voltage of six to 12 watts which average a life of about 45 hours and cost Rs 200 to replace each time. The electrical fittings alone, the Museum estimates, have cost Rs 45,000 and although the price of the entire show has not been worked out it is estimated to cost anywhere between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 4 lakh in arrangements alone.

Despite the rather poor publicity the show has received and the shoddily photographed catalogue, pamphlets and posters, the effort of organising such a meticulous exhibition on a scale that is both comprehensive and compact cannot be without rewards. Entering the low-ceilinged gallery painted a flat gray, each bronze glows with a life of its own. Elegantly composed in their placings, with precise and simple explanatory notes, the exhibition is the best thing that has happened in a revival of the glories of a classical art. And certainly the most encouraging to revive the National Museum's flagging reputation as a repository of the best in Indian art.

—SUNIL SETHI

MADHYA PRADESH

The Burden Of Freedom

EVERY Congress(I) minister swears by the new 20-point programme. Point number six relates to the rehabilitation of bonded labour. The Madhya Pradesh Government claims that, to date, 1,891 bonded labourers have been identified and freed in the state. But what happens to the labourers once the press notes crowing over their release are thrown into the dust bin? To find out, Correspondent SREEKANT KHANDEKAR *travelled some 900 km for six days in the districts of Chhatarpur, Panna, Satna and Sidhi where, according to the state Government, about a quarter of all bonded labourers freed in the state are located. His report:*

NAYAGAON is a large village (population: 5,000), about 45 km from the district headquarters of Satna. On February 18, 1982, 34 bonded labourers were freed by the then district magistrate Manoj Kumar. More than one year later, on February 28, 1983, aid to set them up in their new life had still not arrived. District Magistrate D.S. Mathur said that the promised assistance—goats, bullocks and farming implements, depending on the labourers' choice—would arrive by mid-March.

But the labourers are worried. Said one bitterly: "So much time has gone by. More than a year. If we don't get our animals by Holi (March 29), we will be committed to bondage for another year." In this area, the labourer's fate for the coming year is sealed on Holi, when he decides whether he wants to continue to be a *lagua* in the coming year.

■ Badala, son of Ramdas, a middle-aged man, is one of the 34 who were released last year. To clear a debt of Rs 200, he has been working with Jai Mangal Singh, a local landlord, for the last 10 years—and one year after being identified he continues to do so. "What is the alternative?" he asks. "Last year the sahebs told me that I was free. But they did not give me food. So I have to work."

Meagre Earnings: His day begins at four in the morning and finishes at six in the evening with a brief break for lunch when the landlord gives him a meal of two rotis and a little rice. At the end of the day he gets about 1.3 kg of jawa (an inferior kind of barley) for nearly 14 hours on his landlord's farm—and with this he supports a family of five. At the end of the year, he gets about 150 kg of a mix of jawa and wheat as *rakaana*, which is his share in the crop produced by the landlord. His average earning per day, after a year of freedom, is about Rs 3. The minimum statutory wage is Rs 7 a day.

■ Ram Visal, son of Bihari, who is in his twenties, is a sullen man. He was working to pay off a debt of Rs 500. Says Visal reluctantly: "After I was freed, I thought help would come soon. So I did not renew my bondage, but went off to Bombay instead because I had to earn something." He pulled a cart in the metropolis, and slept on the pavements like countless others. But things didn't work out quite as he had planned. Back in Nayagaon, he is in dire financial straits. He is not the only one who has been driven to Bombay by desperation: currently, there are about a dozen of the 34 who are in that city because the promised assistance has not arrived.

■ Siva Visal, son of Mangalwa, is in his mid-twenties and extremely voluble. Currently, he is employed in government work on daily wages near Nayagaon. Breaking stones, he pauses to say: "Yes, I know the law. I know that I don't have to clear my debts with the landlord and I don't have to work with him. And yet, I wen
landlord as a *lagua* for anoth
bondage. These sahebs told us la
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Writ Petition: Nayagaon is
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22, 1982, Jyoti Prakash of the Ga
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been studying the bonded labour s
several years now: "You can im
state of those labourers who have
fight for them."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

"These sahebs told us last year that we were free. But they did not tell us what to do with our freedom."

—SIVA VISAL

**"Last year I was to
I was free. But they
not give me food. S
I have to work for t
same local landlord**

—BADALA

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BADALA

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far off the mark. A classic ex- this governmental neglect exists Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun district, Sidhi, one of the most areas in the state. Fifty kilometres is the tehsil town of Deosar. Teh- Dubey sits in his office, turning of a tattered file that deals with labourers. Says he: "No, it is that nothing has been done for of these people were released in and in February 1977 they were five acres of land. And now, th back, as the first half of their they have been given two bullocks so that they can plough the land."

kilometres from Dubey's office is of Jhakrawal. One of the released, of Sai Chamar, was drowned wards and the district administra- ed to give the bullocks to his wife, "Land? Five acres?" says she, her inkling in a frown. "Oh yes, seve- ago, we were told that we were the five acres of land. But I have never patwari hasn't hepled so I don't e it is."

Aid: Traditionally, bullock-carts been used in Sidhi—one scheme ago to introduce them failed villagers were not interested— aniya, mother of three sons and ers, has two more mouths to feed. doesn't have land, she does not to do with the bullocks.

not the only one. Deep inside the about 80 km from Sidhi and by a road that even a jeep can negotiate, lies the hamlet of Jud- . Ramdeo and Sukhdeo are als who were bonded labourers landlord, Baba Ahir, until their 1976.

deo and Ramdeo are brothers. deo, the older of the two: "All of en five acres of land each. But the the mountains." He points to a that rises sharply behind his hut. farm on land like that?" Does he deed? He rushes eagerly into his ing two pieces of paper, wrapped a plastic sheet. He gives one to and unwraps the other, his gnarled bling. Badky, an elderly man with ead interjects: "What are we to do bullocks? They are an additional Without land, what use are they to

years of freedom have left the life unaltered. "We are still unsure re our next meal is going to come Sukhdeo. His brother, while in earned about Rs 90 per month—he the same amount, weaving baskets ane—and on that he subsists with his wife, two sons and a daughter.

THE REHABILITATION scheme is in a mess in a state which, ironically, abolished bonded labour—on paper—even before the Centre with the Madhya Pradesh Abadh Shram Pratished Adhiniyam of 1975. In the following year came the Central Bonded Labour System (Abolition and Rehabilitation) Act. At that stage no special rehabilitation scheme was formulated and bonded labourers who were freed were expected to be employed on daily wages in existing irrigation, soil conservation and tribal and Harijan welfare programmes.

Then, in May 1978, the Central Government introduced a scheme in selected districts for the rehabilitation of the bonded, in which the Centre would bear half the cost. Under it, assistance of between Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 was to be provided, depending on the nature of help sought. In 1980–81, the Centre announced that such schemes would operate in all districts and not only the selected ones as earlier.

Tortuous System: The procedure of procuring the grant is complicated: after a bonded labourer is located, his case is first put up in the sub-divisional officer's (SDO's) court. After the evidence is heard, he is formally freed and then a scheme for his rehabilitation is prepared on a standard proforma after the viability of the scheme is looked into. The file then proceeds to the Labour Department in Bhopal. When the department is satisfied, the file proceeds to Delhi—since the Centre contributes half the amount—where it is inspected by a screening committee comprising officials of the labour and home ministries. Then the file is returned to Bhopal and finally the amount is sanctioned.

Off record, district officials admit that assistance must come immediately for, otherwise, the released labourer goes through a period of unbearable tension. The old life of bondage no longer offers him its security—the poverty notwithstanding—and on the other hand, he has no alternative. In effect, when he is released, he is often deprived of his job without anything in return. Says a collector: "If the decision on the scheme could be taken at our level, aid would be prompt. If we could give concrete evidence of help, it would encourage other bonded labourers to come forward. But as things are, I'm not surprised no one wants to be identified."

In Nayagaon's case the men were identified on February 18, 1982. On April 26, 1982

"Several years ago, we were told that we were the owners of five acres of land. But I have never seen it."

—INDRANIYA

the proposals of rehabilitation were sent to the labour commissioner in Indore—until recently the files used to go to him and then on to Bhopal. For six months the file was stuck in the secretariat in Bhopal and queries flew back and forth between the state capital and the collectorate in Satna. Finally, on October 6, 1982, the final proposals were sent once again from the Satna Collectorate.

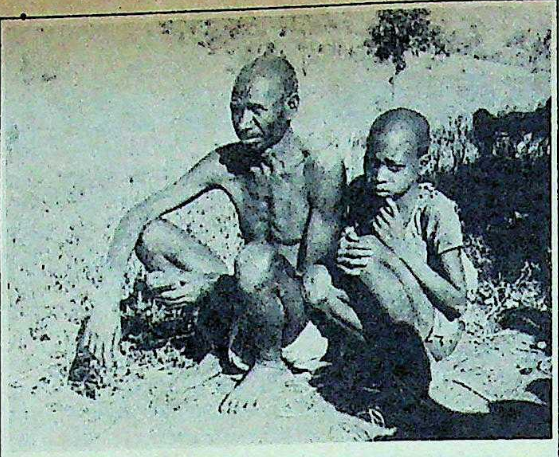
District officials plead their innocence and point an accusing finger at Bhopal and Delhi. Snaps a senior Labour Department official: "What do they expect? The proforma should carry basic information about the labourer's name, age, property and the like. Even this is not filled in properly. That is why delays take place."

It is the same story everywhere. In Panna, where the scheme is better administered than elsewhere, a scheme for the rehabilitation of 47 persons was submitted in October 1981. The first instalment was sanctioned in January 1982 but the second and final instalments didn't come until last month, 17 months after the list was handed in.

Identified Labourers: What is even more appalling is the fact that a large number of beneficiaries are "missing". During the Emergency drive for release of bonded labour, 1,531 were identified throughout the state. In 1979, none were located, in 1980 the number was 75, in 1981 it was 57 and in 1982, the figure was 195. Including the 33 released so far in 1983, the Government claims to have released 1,891 men.

But the fact is that of the 1,531 "freed" in the Emergency, 1,314 can no longer be located. A Labour Department spokesman in Bhopal says that when they were released, there was no scheme for their rehabilitation and the district authorities employed—and thus "rehabilitated"—them on daily wages in ongoing Government schemes. When the scheme came into effect, collectors of all districts were asked to find them. According to the spokesman, "they have probably found work outside their villages which is why they cannot be located."

However, the department has no information on how long they were employed on daily wages before they were taken to be "rehabilitated". Chances are that the district administrations have made no effort to even locate them: after all, 85 per cent of the people couldn't have simply left



"What are we to do with the bullocks? They are an additional burden. Without land, what use are they to us?"
—BADKU

"All of us were given five acres of land each. But the land is up in the mountains. Who can farm on land like that?"
—RAMDEO

the villages forever. There i provide an answer. The state ment, however, did not b claim in the Supreme Court plying to Prakash's writ th were taken for their rehabil

Contradictory Figures: T amazing part of the entire pro is that government officials agree on the total number of la released, figures that have be plied in the Supreme Court state Assembly. In reply to a q by legislator Rama Shankar Labour Minister Tara Singh replied on December 14, 198 many as 1,858 persons ha released.

Says Chhatarpur's C Hoshiar Singh: "So far, o bonded labourers have be tified in my district because t blem is not very acute her Viyogi's reply states that 79 s have been located in Chhatar Satna, Viyogi makes a claim of Collector D.S. Mathur can a for only the 34 of Nayagaon u end of 1982 (21 more have bee this year). In Sidhi, the autho account only for 102 of the 1 med by Viyogi.

The Labour Departme sman stoutly maintains that h are correct but is unable to e the difference. What is true i districts is probably true else the state too. And the departm face the charge of supplying i figures to the Supreme Court the Assembly.

The bonded labour is u to ever get a fair deal simply b the pressures operating again are too great. The Thakur and min landlord is a powerfu —financial as well as politica cannot be ignored. Says P "The rehabilitation program never be permitted to work. I dangerous for local political If thousands of bonded labou shouting for their rights, it w the status quo and the rura structure. No politician i would want it to succeed."

The best illustration of reluctance comes from the fa the districts of Chhatarpur, Satna, and Sidhi the local programme committees have f unearth a single bonded lab nearly three years. The up the bonded is a fine slog remains a slogan.

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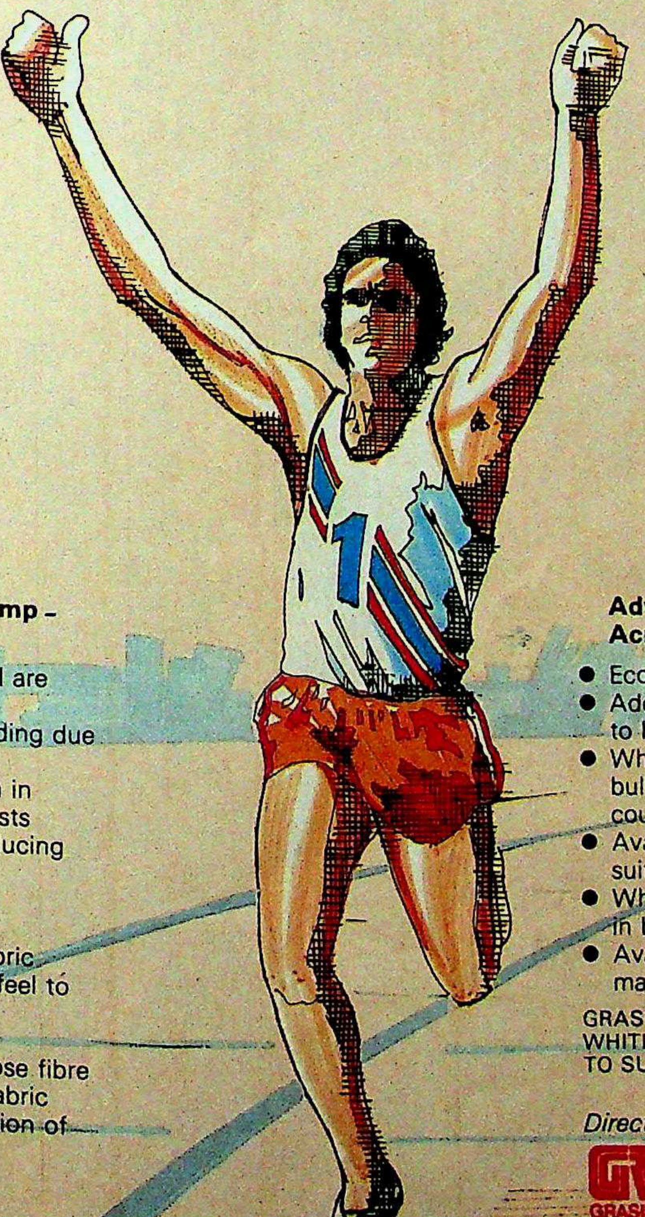

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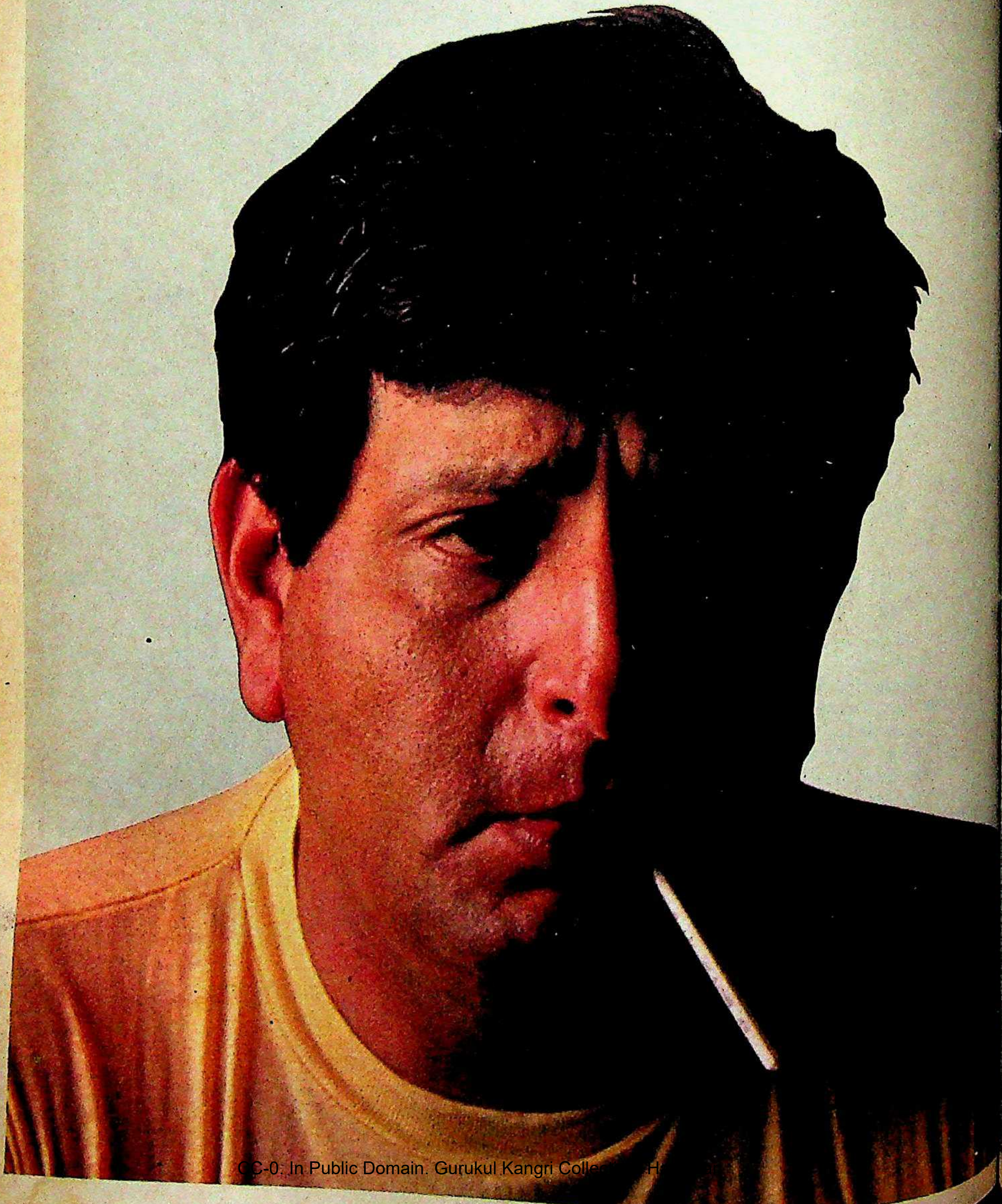

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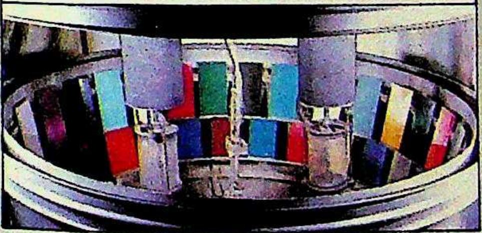

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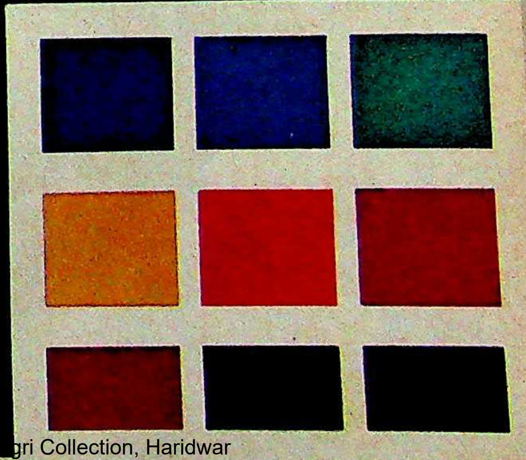

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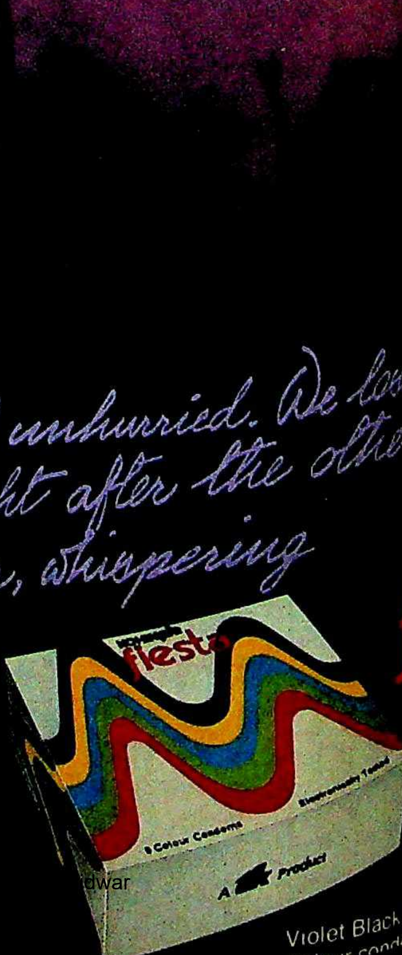
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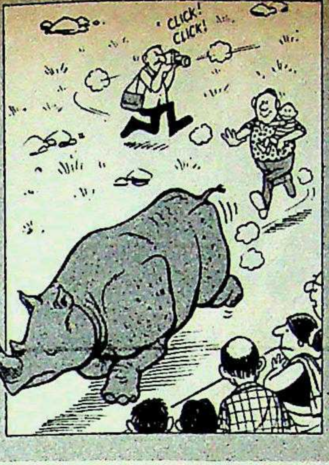
RUMBA

imals in captivity em to bring out the the crowds of gaw- , women and children ntemplate them from er side of the fence. At lhi zoo, among the be- ho receive the most at- is the rhinoceros, with plets of pink-coloured that ooze out of his ide and look like blood. owever, the cake for ed enthusiasm was taken by a man and his baby last fortnight. He arrived at the two-acre enclosure with his babe in his arms and a slightly embarrassed photographer in tow. A quick look around to see if any keeper was watching and the three were over the wall. To other watchers, it was clear that the man wanted a picture of 'I, my child, and my rhino' on his mantelpiece.


CLICK!
CLICK!

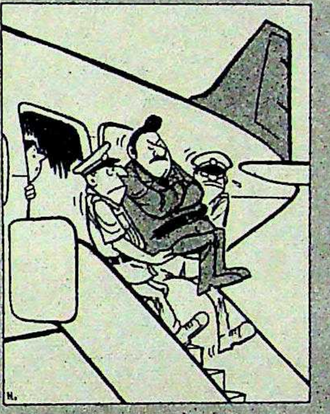
Unfortunately, the rhino wasn't very enthusiastic about the whole thing and for some time the stalkers went through a cautious scouting operation in the enclosure, trying to approach the rhino without being seen, perhaps with visions of head-down, horn-ready charges running through their heads.

However, before they could get too close, a keeper spotted them, ordered them out of the enclosure and hauled them to the director's office. He gave them a good talking-to on the subject of zoo manners before he let them go.

GHT OF FANCY

ome people just have to eptions to the rule. Last ht, Mohammed Ali, a obstinate young man ed in Saudi Arabia, himself to the non- mists. He had arrived in y from the Middle nd days later caught a for Madras. At mbakkam airport, the gers crowded into the for a quick getaway. However, when a hostess glanced along the seats, she saw that Mohammed Ali had refused to be one of the herd, and was still comfortably settled in his chair, looking at the scenery.

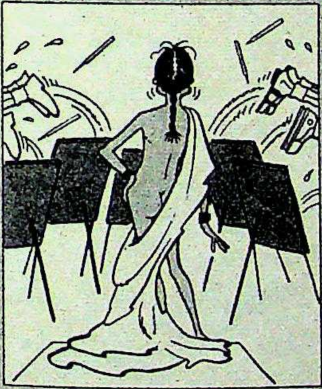
When the airlines staff asked him politely to get up and go, he shook his head. They went and got the police. The police asked Mohammed Ali, reportedly less politely, to get up and go. And again the brave man from the sands shook his head. There was nothing for it, then. Brawny arms hooked around his arms and he found himself swiftly hustled out of the plane, along the tarmac and into the domestic arrivals hall. And there they left him.



However, it looked as if he was going to need more help, because he kept dashing from place to place in the hall, without bothering to collect his luggage. Flying does strange things to some people.

NG PROBLEMS

udes! Nudes! Nudes! the cry at the Delhi of Art, which is re- y facing the prospect g to stop its live draw- sses because there seem w takers for the privi- posing with nothing or before students who ketch the curves as ly as possible.



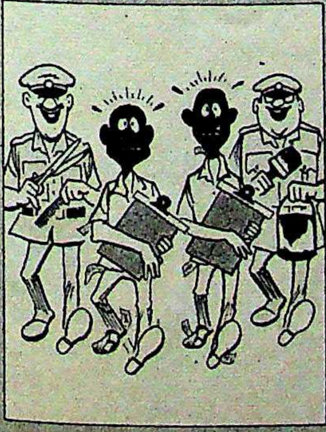
Apparently, the college needs at least five models for its painting, sculpture and applied arts classes. But only one model is available and is reportedly getting a little tired of getting a stiff neck after hours of behaving like a statue.

The institution has repeatedly raised its rates. The current ones are Rs 4 per hour for a nude pose, Rs 3 for the semi-nude, and Rs 2.50 for a draped pose. The job means modelling for a minimum of five hours each day.

But nobody is interested, not even beggar women who were invited to pose. A proposal to scour the red-light district for candidates was turned down, for obvious reasons. And every day one Rubens or Gauguin turns away from art for lack of subject matter.

SE SHAVE

opying during exam- s is a chronic disease of dian examination sys- nd students have been to turn themselves into ripts—history on the athematics up the nd biology on a little paper tucked into the Last fortnight, in , Uttar Pradesh, two erprising young boys for the board examinations prepared to 'cog' and paid the price.



As their fellow students scribbled on furiously, one of the boys tried to slip a piece of paper to his friend, sitting nearby. They would have got away with it, as countless others had done before, and no doubt will afterwards, but for a sharp-eyed and firm invigilator who caught and hustled them out of the room. Outside, they were handed over to the police.

The police hunted for a suitable punishment and decided that an ordinary reprimand would be too mild. A few minutes later, the two boys found themselves jammed in a hair-cutting saloon with the shears clipping away lustily. In less time than it takes to tell all their hair was on the floor and they were bald and back in the examination premises escorted by laughing policemen.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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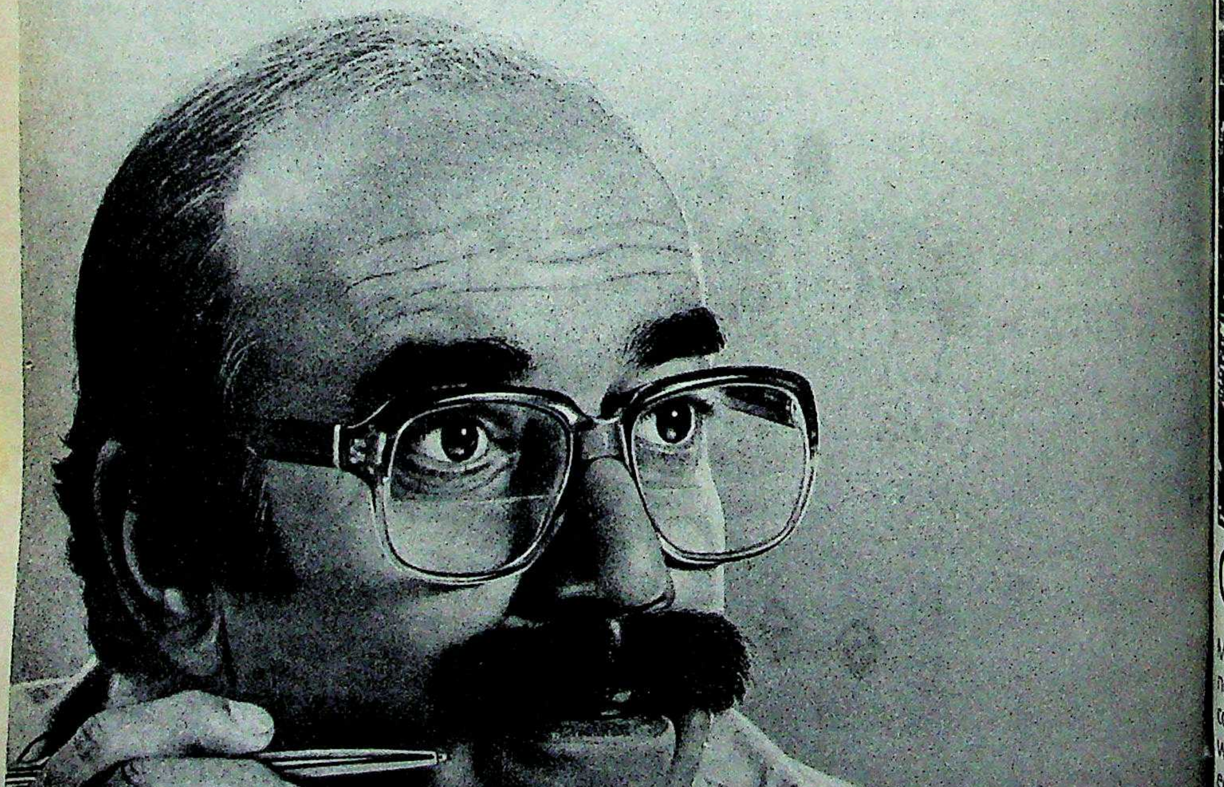

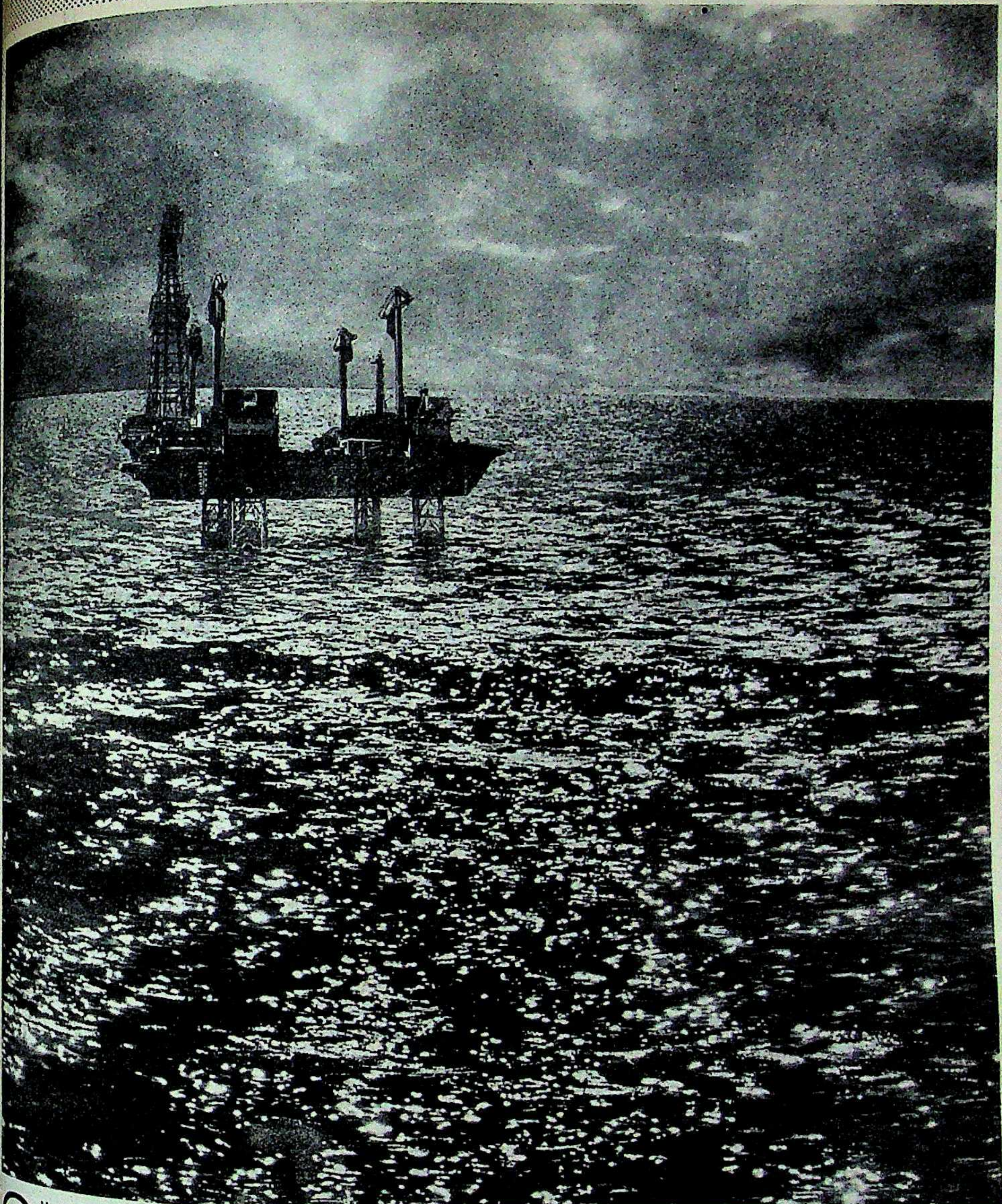

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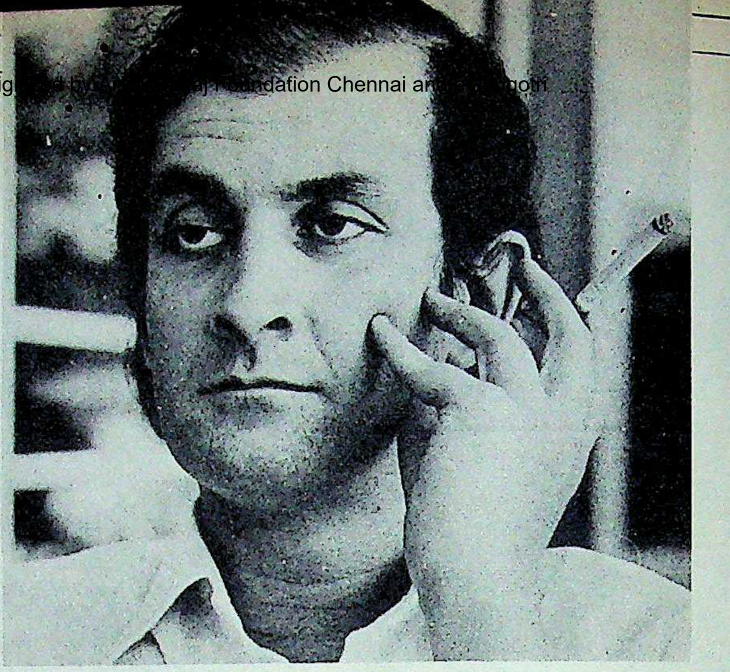

After Midnight

THE SCENE was characteristically Indian, and characteristic of sudden success. The organisers of the first Salman Rushdie lecture in New Delhi last week had booked a modest hall to accommodate about 50 people. Closer to 500 showed up, and were spilling into the narrow corridor outside when the author arrived. Confusion prevailed. The organisers couldn't find an alternative space. Rushdie's sponsors were in a flap. And members of the audience, depending upon the flexibility of their kneecaps, were either threatening or refusing to squat on the floor.

In the end, Rushdie took matters into his own hands. With a neat Woody Allen grin, he leapt onto a table at the end of the corridor, slightly knocking a dangling lampshade with his head, and began his talk, "Can't hear you," boomed a burly Sikh from the back. "But I can hear *you*," shot back Rushdie, jumping off the table to stand, soap-box-orator-style, in the centre of the crowd. Back to the wall, he completed a fascinating talk, while his audience crouched, crawled, squatted or craned over shoulders to listen spellbound.

An hour earlier in the afternoon he had been signing copies of *Midnight's Children* in a local bookshop. In exactly 90 minutes he signed over 300 copies. A steady stream of people—students, housewives, academics, businessmen, bureaucrats and diplomats—poured in, and the bookshop owner said he was frankly staggered at the response to the advertisements in the morning papers. Rushdie's publishers claimed that the book had sold 4,000 copies in hard cover and 45,000 in paperback—besides the proliferating pirated edition—which in India is amazing for a work of serious contemporary fiction that noone seems to completely understand but everyone relates to on some level or the other.

No other writer writing about India—Indian or foreign, based here or abroad—has aroused such avid curiosity and popular response after one book. No Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Ruth Jhabvala Ved Mehta or Anita Desai has, quite simply, given post-Independence Indians a voice, a fictional forum so easy to p in. *Midnight's Children* has ratified the right to use Indian E a language. It has exploded the myth of the Indian d system. It has codified the cultural confusions of its ruling amount of influence-hunting," says professor of Meenakshi Mukherjee, "will explain away Rushdie's inventiveness...even if he cannot technically be called In Indian reader has reasons to feel that he has a special cl book. Who else will catch the nuances of Rushdie's intelle recognise the variations of Indian speech, or decipher th code made up of actual events and their metaphoric disto treats the amorphous reality of India with such casual ass takes linguistic risks with so much comic abandon, that a debates about the ability of the English language to e various shades of Indian life seem irrelevant."

Equally remarkable is Rushdie's achievement in p large segments of urban Indian life exactly as educa reclaim it: by revising their history, distorting the rea them, and forever despairing about their future. He has u of the novel as a weapon for provoking change—a chang and perceptions—and at the same time he has managed to the transitions of a society in flux into a single work. By b from the language of cinema—of cross-cutting a cuts—from Indian epics, from personal history, memo country's political progress, he has created a language of his completely breaks away from the literary tradition in I

Rushdie sees his own life as indicative of this c personal history, he claims, is nothing but a series of d "Bombay," he says of the city he reclaimed from memor the core of his book, "is one of the many dislocations of m first was to be a Kashmiri. The second was to grow up in The third to move from India to Pakistan, then from P England, and the fifth dislocation, I suppose you could ca Muslim in India."

SHDIE, the man, turns out to be astonishingly like the ook he wrote: as accessible, talkative, opinionated, mentative, funny, irrational and acutely observant. A small, compact man, matter-of-fact and serious, who wears sensible rubber-soled shoes and has managed y traces of an accent he may have acquired at Rugby or . Somehow the Woody Allen image sticks: behind the d spectacles, the eyes, with their long eyelashes and rows, accentuate a man watching a lot, missing nothing. holed-up-in-the-attic writer. "I suppose I do talk a lot ing," he admits, remembering at the same time James n for the writer of fiction: "Silence, exile and cunning", at the writer must pursue his craft by keeping his eyes s mouth shut. Rushdie thinks it's important for writers to elves up in their rooms. Back in his north London home ares with his English wife and three-and-a-half-year-old is steadily at his desk for four to five hours a day and cuts cial life. But the view out of his window is not of Bombay. ure on his writing desk, of a large house with many d four tiled towers, reminds him of the city of his origin.

e returned to Bombay in 1975—his family had em- Karachi 11 years earlier—to research *Midnight's Children* d stood for a long time outside this house. He was born in t want to go inside, he says, because he knew the people e there and was not looking for their solicitous goodwill. ng to remember if the house looked as he remembered it London—"not quite, the shapes of the towers were e tiles were another colour"—but then he consulted a rectory. And there was the real reminder of his past: his e, address and telephone number. "It was almost as if swer the phone inside the house if I called."

e is not beset by nostalgia. The problem of recall interests at time and physical displacement will do to memory. *Children*, which he has repeatedly called a "novel of an exploration of this: of the human being's fallibility in g things past accurately, of being able to look back only roken mirrors", "cracked lenses" and "fractured per- The past, he says, is a country we have all emigrated from. t emigrations of his own life have heightened the sense of d the loss is made more concrete by the physical fact of his Why not then, as he did in his book, "create Indias of the "trust the truth of memory over the truth of fact"?

ng Indian realities after a passage of eight years—he has ng for nearly two months, mostly in the south—he feels changed. "For the first time I felt in Bombay that there I could get lost in. That was odd, though the city *felt* the me brittle, brushy and gossipy city it always was."

t two trips to India have been voyages of rediscovery. e has travelled he has sought out regional writers, painters kers. He is greatly impressed by the work of the Kannada d professor U.R. Anantha Murthy. In Bombay he has t deal of his time meeting poets Adil Jussawalla and Arun Baroda has converted him into a staunch protagonist of y painters in residence there like Bhupen Khakar, Gulam d Vivan Sundaram. In Baroda he met writers concerned possible extinction of the Gujarati language—echoing nt of Czech writer Milan Kundera who is worried about of Czech creative writing. This appeared to Rushdie a international parallel.

e same time, Rushdie feels strongly about the use of an Indian language: "Just as Irish writers created Irish d the Americans their own brand of English, Indians too sh Indian English. There is no way we can create an India without using English—it's the principal mode for o communicate with another Indian."

POLITICALLY, for Rushdie counts himself a political animal and considers the act of description a political act, he senses "a note of utterly black despair" which he finds disturbing. "People say to me that they found my book despairing. To me the quality of despair in people's voices here seems infinitely greater. There is a sense of bleakness though they do ask big questions about politics." Overall, he says, he cannot but help point out the intellectual and moral and political bankruptcy that seems to have overtaken India. "It is remarkable that the situation in Assam has not shaken people to the core. Never before have I encountered this sense of hopelessness here. I've heard people talk like that in Pakistan for years, not here."

Yet he is reluctant to make "V.S. Naipaul-type statements" or "prophesy the future". His job is only to pick out certain strains wrought by change, especially political change which provided the running metaphor in *Midnight's Children*, reaching its climax with Mrs Gandhi's Emergency. Today it amazes him that none of the mud will stick to her. "She seems to have some mud-repellent agent. She seems to come out shining white all the time... but the enormous mistake the West makes about her is that she is indispensable. I don't believe she is running the country; the country works despite her control not because of it."

In England, to his mind a much more acquiescent society where the democratic system has suffered enormous abuses, things are different—worse under Mrs Thatcher who has her Government running scared. There is much that he deplores about English society but continues to live there because of one aspect of it that remains radical, nonconformist, dissenting and iconoclastic. Still, he thinks about moving here all the time. "I don't feel rooted in England. I want to start living out of here more and more. My wife loves it here and so do I. Perhaps if I can get an assignment, at a university or something, we could spend part of the year here."

Back in Karachi, members of his family feel the same about India. His old father may not articulate the feeling but his mother and sisters think that it was a complete mistake to move to Pakistan. "The question asked about Pakistan for so long was 'Can Pakistan survive?' And to me the answer increasingly is 'No'. Islam was a very acceptable basis for Pakistan so long as it was kept in the background. Once it begins to be rammed down people's throats, and is no longer merely the glue to hold a state together, the state will eventually be balkanised. Bhutto had a chance of doing something, but being the megalomaniac he was, he wanted too much and placed himself above the law. Now General Zia has completed, or is completing, the job of demolishing the Pakistan ideal."

In India he sees the rise of regional politics as "not a bad thing because it has no secessionist overtones". South India, where he effectively spent a month travelling, came to him as a surprise. "Nobody talks or cares much about New Delhi there. The literacy of the common man is amazing. I was in a taxi in Kerala and asked the taxi driver about the Government. He answered in the most detailed monologue about every party in the ruling coalition, not only their leaders but their policies and political chances. It was extraordinary how much the man knew. It seems to me that the south operates like another country. It's their history. It's also their distance from the power centre. The way they are building worlds there has nothing to do with the rest of India."

There is probably too much around him that he feels strongly about. Certain issues—the Falklands war, rising racism, Britain growing more xenophobic—make him very angry. But he refuses to join a political party for being neatly pigeon-holed, though he thinks it proper to back issues as and when they arise. "It's probably a great gift for a writer to be able to watch, or to sit in a room and write. But I see the world in a terrible crisis, and the writer can't lock himself up. You've got to get your hands dirty. You've got to take a stand, though I resist the role of a prophet."

—SUNIL SETHI

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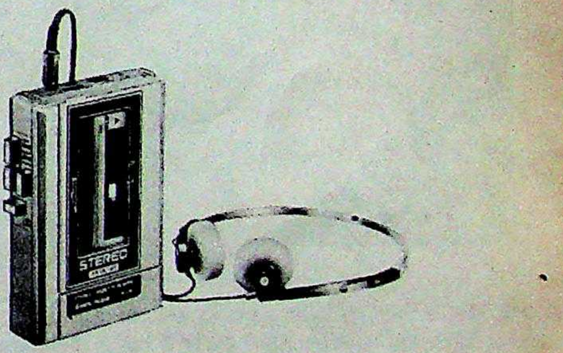

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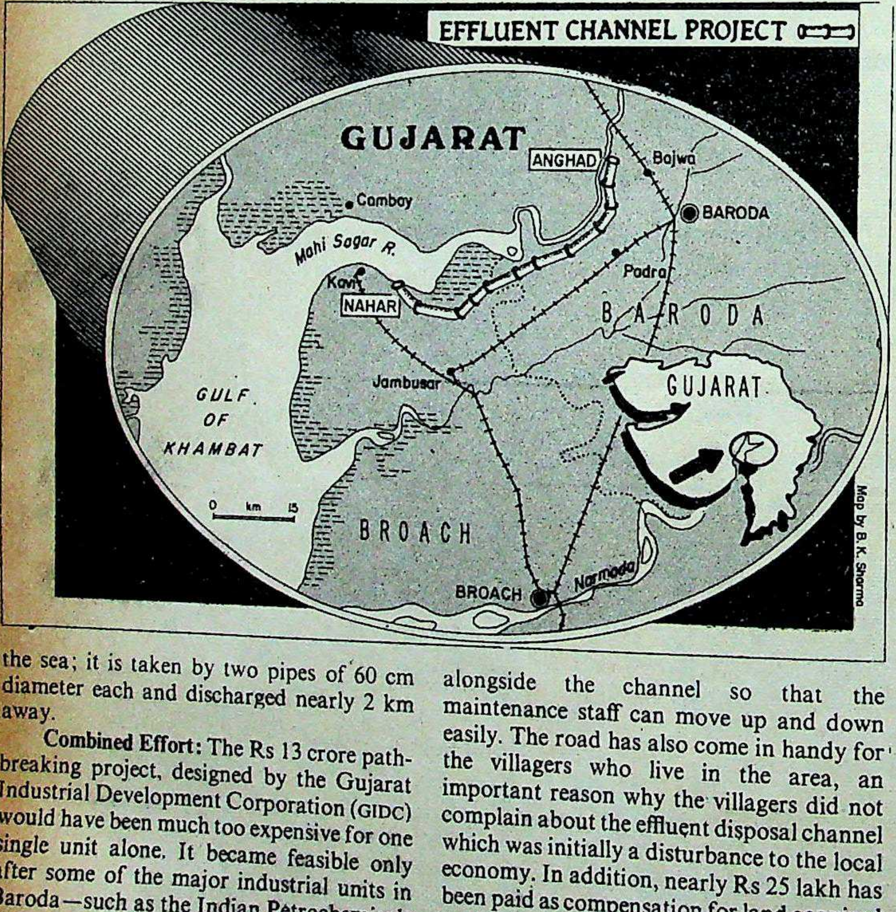
BARODA

Cleaning Up The River

THE INDUSTRIES on the banks of Baroda's river Mini have cleaned up their act. Last month they stopped dumping more than 100 million litres of liquid effluent into the river every day Instead they diverted it to the country's first effluent disposal channel that flows 56 km through Baroda and Broach districts and then empties into the Arabian Sea.

The massive channel is designed to carry 145 million litres a day and now has a spare capacity of 45 million litres a day. And on the way the effluent in the closed 2 m broad channel is monitored and treated. Moreover, the effluent is not just poured into the sea; it is taken by two pipes of 60 cm diameter each and discharged nearly 2 km away.



Map by B.K. Sharma

Combined Effort: The Rs 13 crore path-breaking project, designed by the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) would have been much too expensive for one single unit alone. It became feasible only after some of the major industrial units in Baroda—such as the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd, Gujarat Refinery, Gujarat State Fertilisers Company, Nandesari Industrial Estate of the GIDC—teamed up with Baroda's smaller industrialists and agreed to split the costs of the project between them.

For years the Baroda industrial complex has been discharging its effluents into the Mini river which is a tributary of the Mahi Sagar river. The result has been that the Mini has been virtually turned into an open sewer. The Baroda Municipal Corporation, which draws 10 million gallons from the Mini river. has to go upstream to Vasan where the water is still unaffected by pollution.

A laboratory has been set up near the petrochemicals complex at Baroda to constantly monitor the effluent and put things right when necessary. Six check points have been set up on the 56 km route which will test the effluent every eight hours to ensure that it does not harm aquatic life near the discharge point.

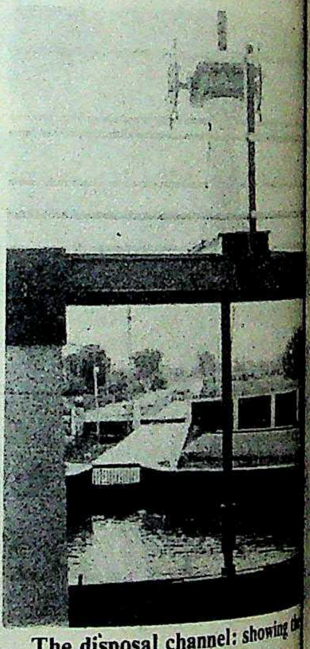
A metalled road has also been built alongside the channel so that the maintenance staff can move up and down easily. The road has also come in handy for the villagers who live in the area, an important reason why the villagers did not complain about the effluent disposal channel which was initially a disturbance to the local economy. In addition, nearly Rs 25 lakh has been paid as compensation for land acquired in the 24 villages.

Productive Uses: Meanwhile, the villagers in Broach, a drought-prone area, are eagerly watching the experiments recently started by the GIDC to use the liquid effluent for farming. Initial results promise a bonanza—the yield increased by nearly three times. The GIDC has bought 30 acres and is holding tests to determine which crops react well to the liquid waste. Interestingly, farmers near the Gujarat Refine lodged a protest against the refin the channel project as they had the effluent for irrigation.

The National Institute o ography was earlier commission GIDC to conduct hydrological points where the effluent is discha institute established how a daily ti the Gulf of Cambay could be ex ensure that effluent was immediat into the sea. Accordingly, the efflu discharged during six hour cycles tide is at an ebb.

The GIDC is now trying to some of the smaller industrial Baroda and Broach to take advan channel and resort to pollution measures. Says Arvind Bhatt, tending engineer of GIDC who charge of the project: "We took it u as a consultancy agency, but with zeal. We made Rs 1.6 crore as co charges paid by participants. We are plough it back for pollution measures at various industrial esta by GIDC." Adds K.C. Kapoor executive of GIDC: "This has enco to even think in terms of setting plants with industrial units p finance. Then power failure can away with."

Its success in Baroda has sp GIDC to try its hand at another effluent channel project which liquid waste from Naroda, Od and other industrial units in A But its present efforts may be a p the rest of the country. —RAME



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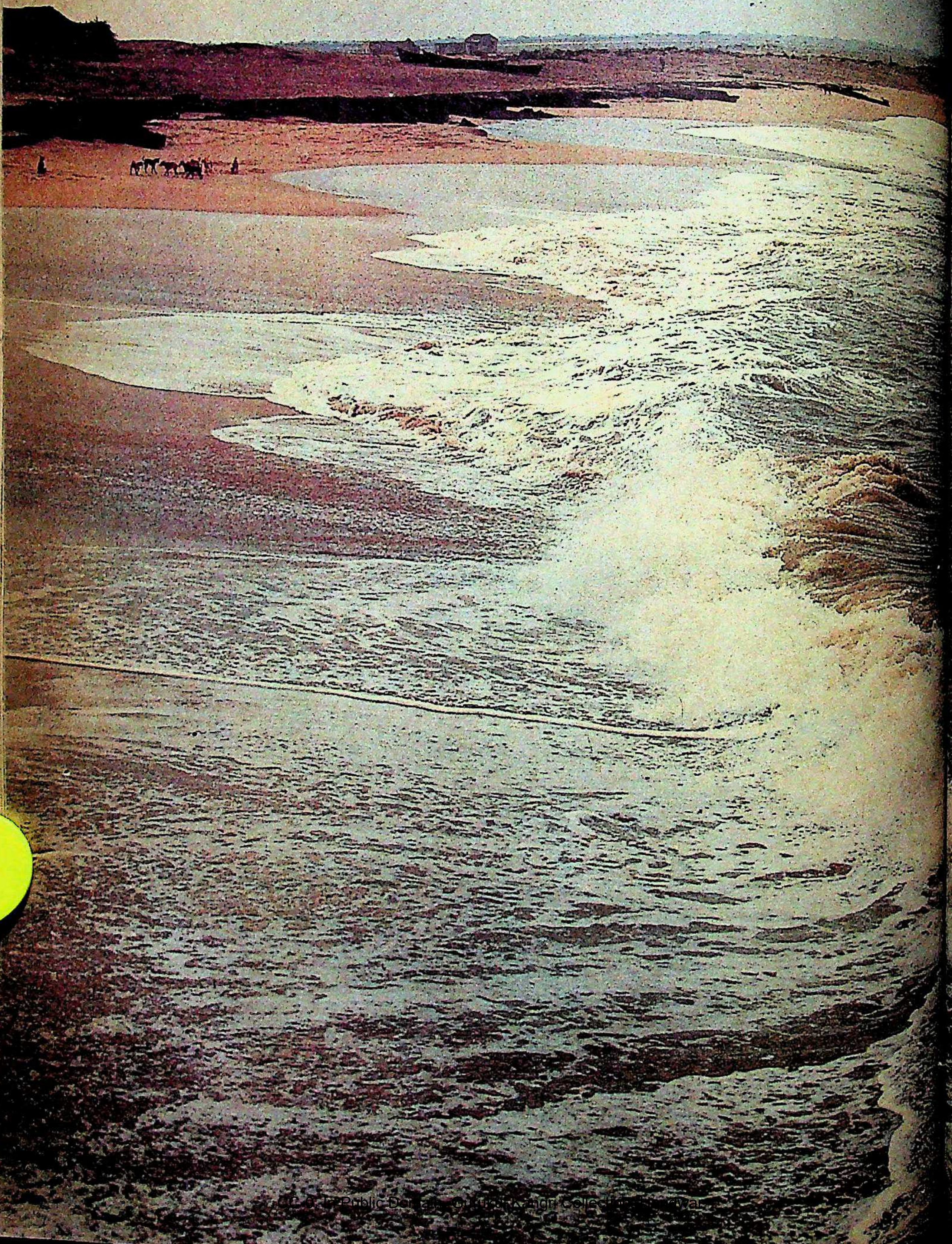

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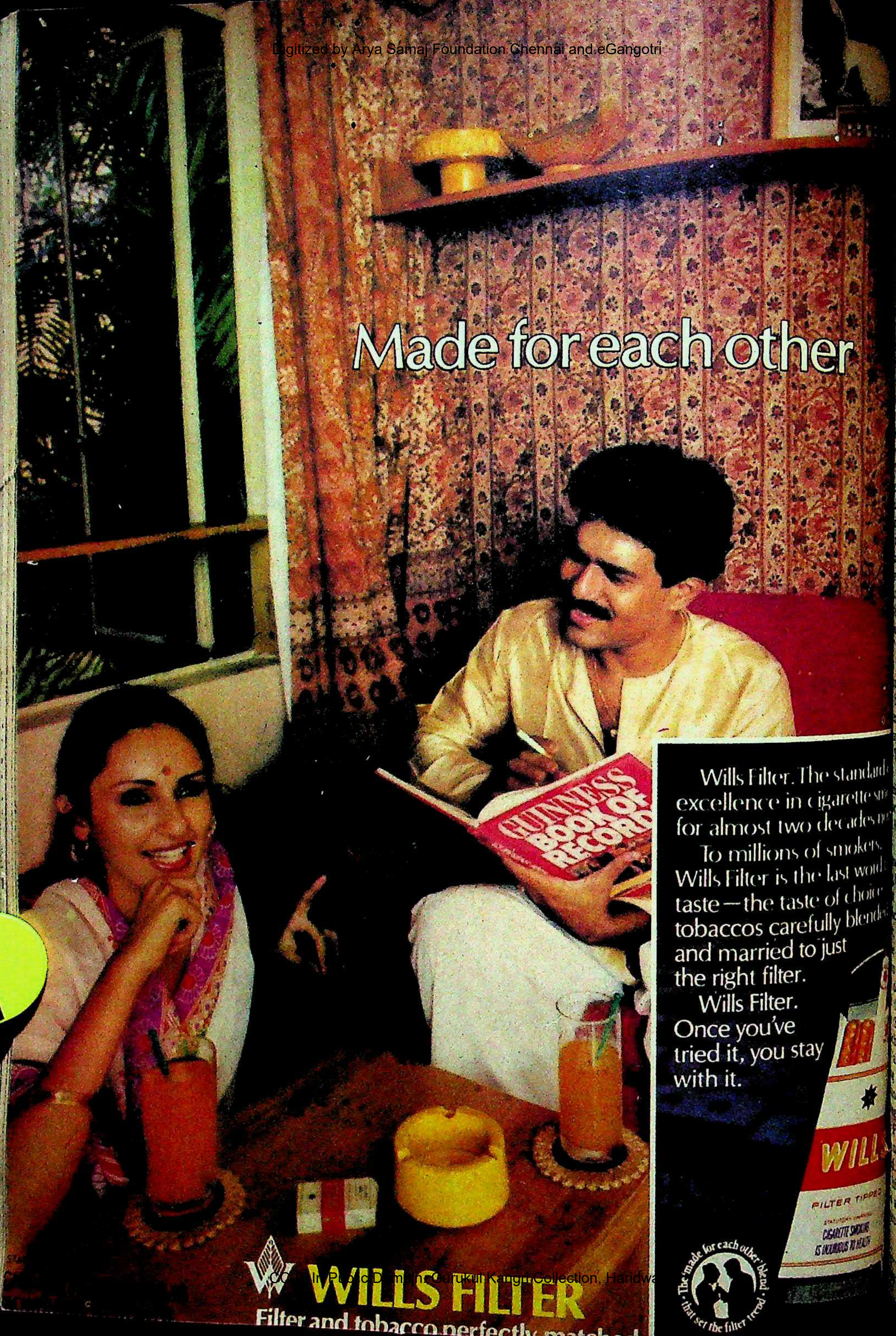

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lling A Forest

came to be known as the Moochi- massacre. Environmentalists fear sound the death knell of the lush of Kerala's Silent Valley, already by a proposed Rs 72 crore hydro- plant. Last fortnight, when the Court responded to the plea of talist groups and stayed the fell- movement of trees in a 110-acre in the Moochikundu area, 400 of Trivandrum, the damage had been done. By one estimate, about worth of mature trees had suc- the woodcutter's axe in the 110- hikundu region.

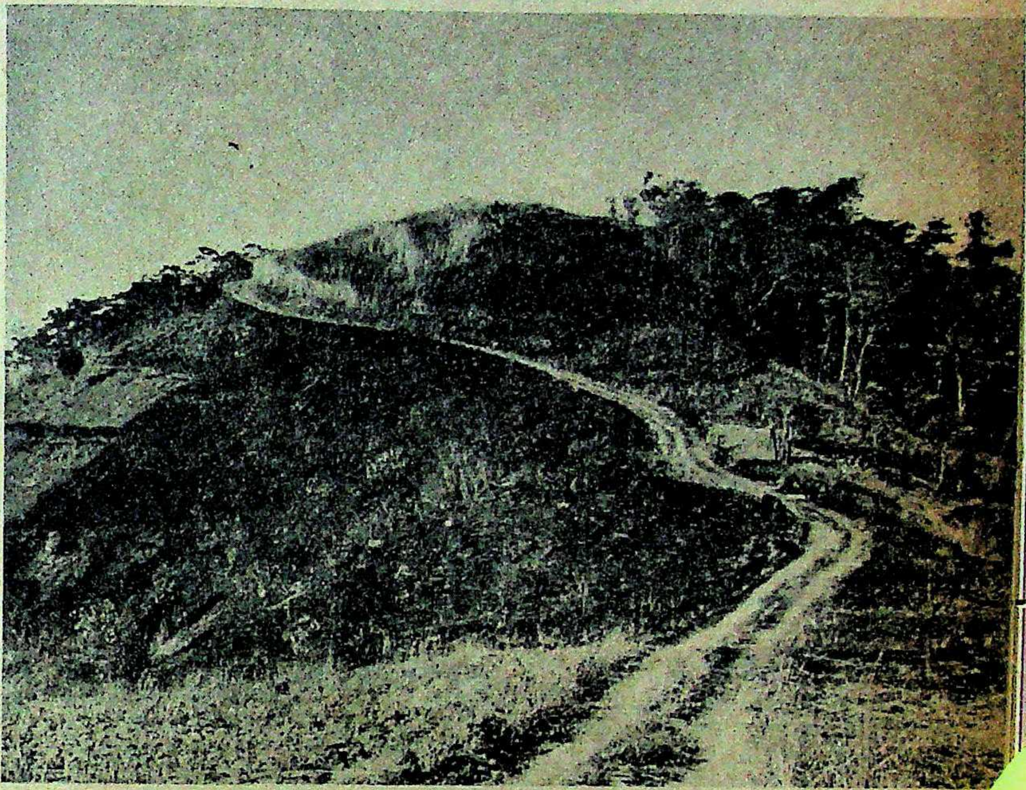
of the felling took the state by The Moochikundu area is the vital een Silent Valley and the reserve forest," says Sathish an environmental scientist who is ving spirit behind the Prakrithi Samithi (PSS) (or the society servation of nature) which moved court. "Once the vital link between rests is severed, the 'gene pool' of al forest will be drastically

fortnight when Forest Minister ddin went to inaugurate a tree ction organised by the Forest at the University College, he was booed out by incensed Said the poet Kamala Das, who ake part in the function: the forest minister, is a hy- having tried to plant a sapling Moochikundu forests were being

mental Damage: At the time of rried locals led by local Marxist President V.M. Abraham plan- the transport of timber out of saying that they were already effect of drought caused by the of trees. They also agreed forestation could permanently the only perennial fresh water is area, the Nellipuzha.

kundu is near Agali village close ley in Palghat district of Kerala. was facilitated by the fact that du area is still a private forest d to 11 title holders. In 1980 Forest Department surveyed the du area, it tried to acquire it as The 11 owners protested and in gh court finally ruled that the private one.

lly the land passed into the



The access road to the Moochikundu forest (top) and felled trees: ruthless plunder

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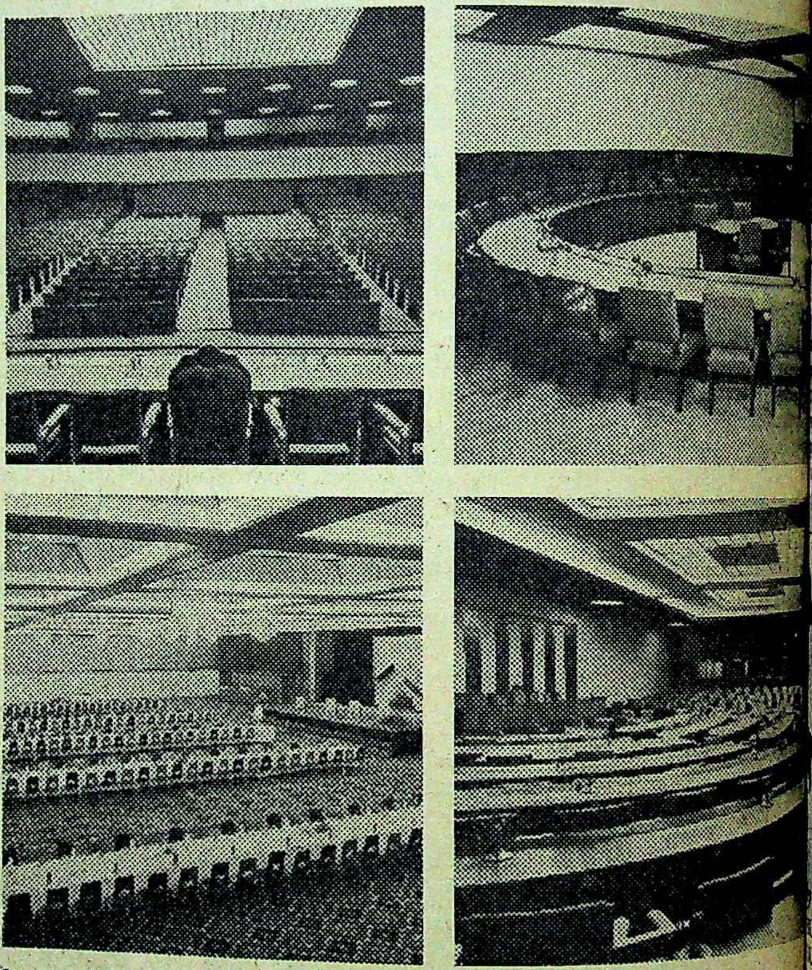

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ATS Timber Contractors, a com- by the son and brother of Seethi giant of south India and close ociate of Deputy Chief Minister med Koya. Haji, also an MLA of Union Muslim League (IUML) uram confirmed that Rs 14 lakh for the land.

ebruary 8, 1983, when the felling 700 men were brought into the daily wage of Rs 20 as against the of Rs 10. Overnight, tents and mushroomed in the middle of forest. A community kitchen and jeep-loads of fresh fish and were brought in. A 12-km-long d in a record time of 20 days. Party MLA K. Krishnan Kutty the area a month later for an on- dy: "It was a swift and ruthless For local labour it was a gold

personally supervised the entire but soon Abraham, the pan- dent, started an agitation. When visited the area last fortnight, rk gang was still felling trees and nts had been brought from move the logs. "We have to work before the monsoon and transport the logs to safety before they start rotting," said K.S. Ahmed, ATS's local supervisor.

Conflict: The agitated villagers of Agali petitioned the collector of Palghat district, who on March 1 ordered that the wood would not be taken away from the area. In response, the ATS Timber Contractors appealed to the high court for permission to transport the logs. Simultaneously, the PSS also asked the high court to intervene to ensure that the felling operations were stopped.

In the state Assembly, Nooruddin was grilled by the Opposition for not being able to stop the felling. Nooruddin said that the Government was helpless because of the 1980 high court order saying that the Moochikundu area was private land. But he added that not even a single log of timber would be allowed to be taken away from the forest.

Help came on March 24, when the high court appointed a three-member commission headed by P.K. Balasubramaniam, an advocate from Ernakulam to investigate the matter and report its findings within a week.

When INDIA TODAY finally tracked him down Haji, who was once a woodcutter himself, said: "It is a campaign by CPI (Communist Party of India) to oust me from my rightful holdings in Moochikundu and grab it for themselves." Haji takes full responsibility for this felling which he asserts is legal. Speaking before the high court order was passed, Haji said confidently: "If there is a law in this land, I will definitely see that the logs are transported to my depot in Calicut."

Concerned Citizens: On the environmental problem, Haji was unmoved. "The environmentalists are making mountains out of mole hills," he said. "People have been cutting trees for centuries but still there is enough water for everybody and the atmospheric conditions have not changed."

Which is just what the environmentalists fear is not true. Many feel that the intensity of drought in southern states, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, will increase year by year if the states don't start an immediate afforestation proramme. If forest officials insist on looking the other way, Silent Valley, the virgin tropical forest may soon disappear, just as the tropical evergreen canopy over Moochikundu has been stripped, leaving behind barren, manmade hills.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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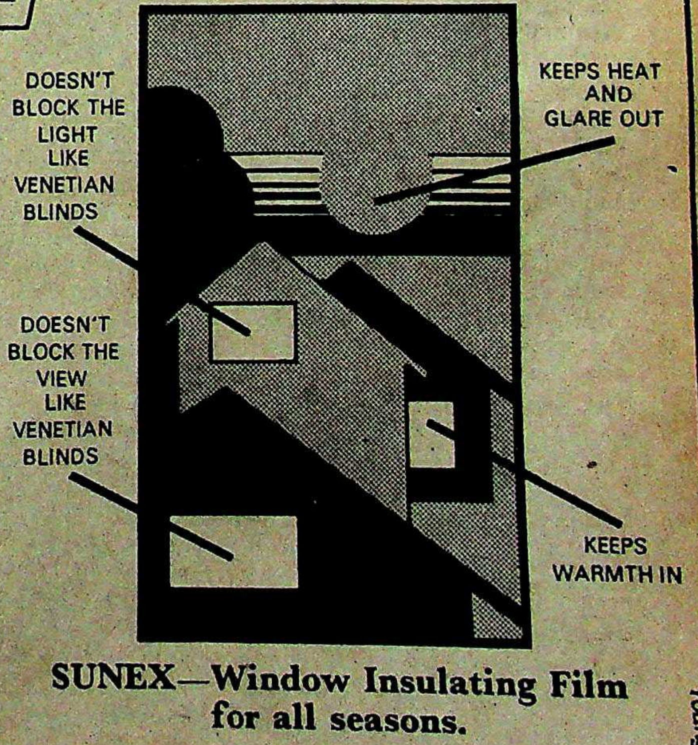
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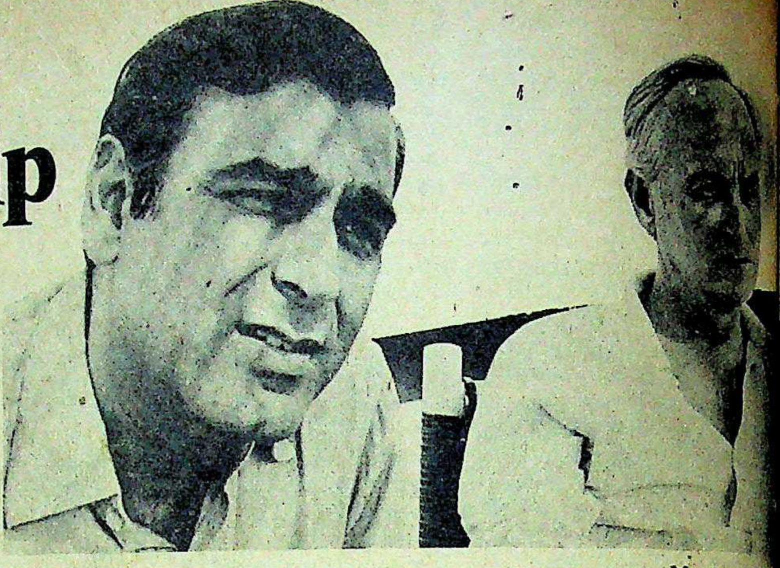
MERCHANT-IVORY

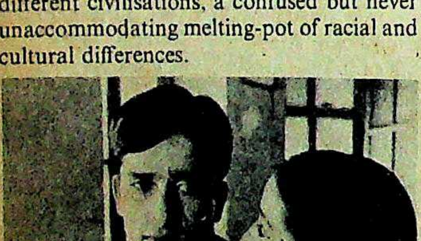
Profitable Partnership



Merchant (left),

IT WAS a fitting tribute to one of the most enduring partnerships in international cinema. Last fortnight, Merchant-Ivory Productions' *Heat And Dust* climbed to the number four position on London's box-office charts, close on the heels of giant productions like *Gandhi*, *The Verdict* and *An Officer And A Gentleman*. The culmination of a prolific 21-year partnership between India-born producer Ismail Merchant, American director James Ivory and Germany-born novelist and screenplay writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the screen adaptation of Jhabvala's novel of two European women in India ran to packed houses and heady critical acclaim. Next May the film, which was jointly financed by independent Indian entrepreneurs and Britain's National Film Finance Corporation, will be sent as the official British entry to the film festival at Cannes.

For 21 years the team has offered the world a refreshingly human view of India as a meeting place of people from radically different civilisations, a confused but never unaccommodating melting-pot of racial and cultural differences.



Kapoor and Naidu in *The Householder*

But the 18 feature films, television "shorts" and documentaries spawned by the partnership all share one thing in common: they focus on the tangled web of human relationships. Explained Ivory: "If we bring a different, or special view of human relationship or people to the screen, then it's because of the triad, the three-headed nature or our partnership influenced equally by a European, an American and an Indian, our treatment of themes perhaps gets a certain special quality in terms of our approach to cultural diversity." Adds Merchant: "We have never taken up the imaginary or false world just to create entertainment. Even if it is a business, we have always believed that film making has to say something very personal; so we have looked for recognition and box-office success on our own terms, not somebody else's."

Enduring Partnership: Twenty-one years and 18 films after starting out, recognition had come to the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala team in no uncertain terms. Timing it to coincide with the premiere of *Heat And Dust*, which marked their twenty-first year together, the British Film Institute (BFI) in London organised a complete retrospective of their works last January. Included in the screenings, in addition to the Merchant-Ivory films were the documentaries and one short television thriller which each made independently of the other. A month later the BFI, along with New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) released *The Wandering Company*, a slickly-produced book commemorating the long and enduring partnership, and detailing film-by-film the development of a team which is "one of the most productive in the history of the cinema". Coming promptly in the wake of the *Heat And Dust* success, London's art cinema circuit last fortnight received yet another Merchant-Ivory release, *The Courtesans Of Bombay*, a documentary on Bombay nautch-houses which appeared in double-bill showings with their earlier short film *Autobiography Of A Princess*.

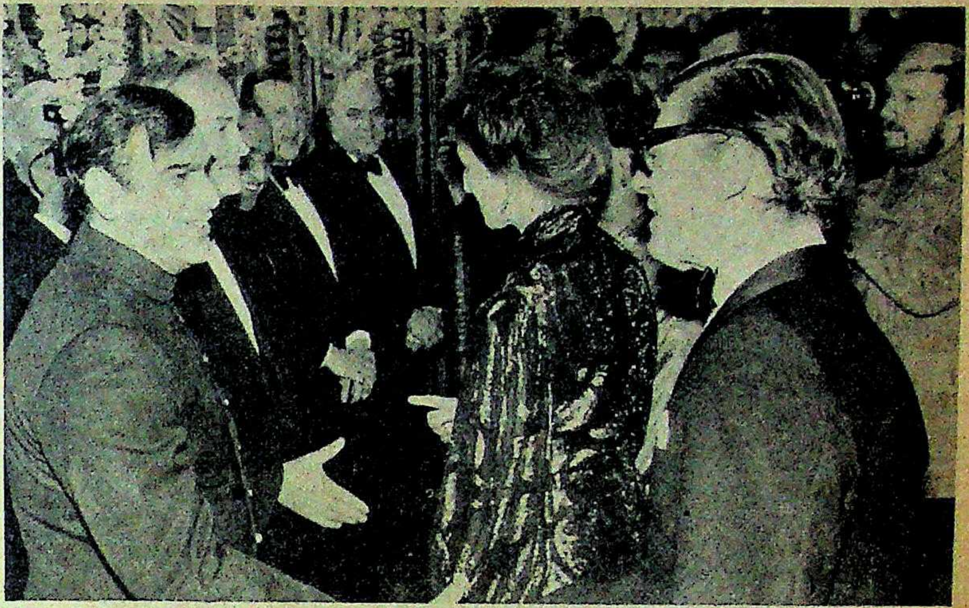
For Ismail Merchant—producer, high-powered spokesman, and organiser of the team—the overwhelming public response to *Heat And Dust* and the recognition by BFI and MOMA, were a cue for launching a massive celebratory tour for M
Ivory Productions (MIP). By end-M
widely-acclaimed producer had d
plans to extend the British retr
through stages to Australia a
Zealand, Los Angeles and the wes
the United States, followed by N
and the east coast, and even Mos
other centres in the Soviet Union.

But perhaps most important
Merchant and Ivory, will be the
tour of India starting next Septem
month the film making duo were b

Aparna Sen and Rita Tushingham in

country on their first visit since the
of *Heat And Dust* finalising pl
Indian celebration of MIP's 21 years
rushed trips to Delhi to confer wi
visits to a health spa in Ba
Merchant, and hectic meeting
Bombay headquarters of their In
ation, the pair tied up booking
Indian release of *Heat And Dust*
be the start of a retrospective tou
eight MIP films, which have no
shown in India. Starting in D

ted team



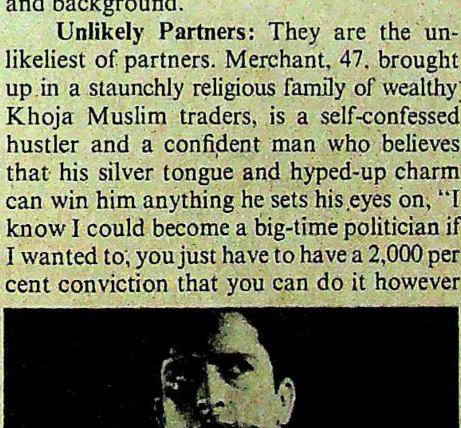
Merchant and Ivory meet Princess Alexandra at the London premiere of *Heat And Dust*

e will wind its way through Bombay and Madras to a string of tres.

TEAM retains an umbilical con- tion with India, where the remark- saga of Merchant-Ivory Pro- egan 22 years ago. Their four ature films, which launched the company internationally, were hemes shot in India, and for *Heat* heir largest, the team returned to y and subject which has spawned orks. Between films abroad, they frequently to Indian subjects, ut six short films and documen- ubjects as diverse as India-born rad C. Chaudhari, predatory wes- ollectors and dealers trying to get on a collection of miniatures and es of Bombay's most congested ses. Said Ivory, whose sharp- lipped exterior conceals wryly- self-deprecating attitude to MIP hance and circumstance which group to its present pre-eminence: n films did not come out of any rge to make films on the country, come here like other western film ecially to make a film. Rather our come out of our own lives in India, siasm and love for Indian things e us want to be here." MIP's past lude *The Householder*, *The Guru* peare Wallah.*

the longest and most in- ductive partnership of producer, d writer in cinema, the story of the Ivory team is at least as exciting as ural calisthenics they have spent arter century portraying on celluloid. Worlds apart as individuals yet each brought to the union a unique experience and background.

Unlikely Partners: They are the unlikeliest of partners. Merchant, 47, brought up in a staunchly religious family of wealthy Khoja Muslim traders, is a self-confessed hustler and a confident man who believes that his silver tongue and hyped-up charm can win him anything he sets his eyes on, "I know I could become a big-time politician if I wanted to; you just have to have a 2,000 per cent conviction that you can do it however remote it may be." Ivory's childhood in an affluent Californian Roman Catholic family followed by years of exposure to India first as an independent documentary film maker and then as a successful feature director have not robbed him at 55 of a hesitant modesty and the capacity to laugh at himself, an ability he used frequently to puncture Merchant's over-enthusiastic hard sell. And Jhabvala, 56, who grew up a Jewish child in Nazi Germany, migrated with her parents to Britain on the eve of World War II, and finally settled in Delhi after her marriage to Indian architect C.V. S. Jhabvala, remains a shy and reclusive person.



Kapoor and Kendal in *Shakespeare Wallah*

With the roaring success of *Heat And Dust*—an enigmatic story of a British woman who succumbs to a grand maharaja in the days of the Raj and bears his child, and her great grandniece, who visits India only to end up recreating her ancestors' "folly" —Ismail Merchant has set his sights on even greater heights. Last fortnight, the mini-mogul drew an ambitious picture of MIP's future growth, which would start with institutionalising and expanding the company on the lines of Hollywood's majors. "To start with we're going to employ at least two more directors and a couple of producers," he explained, emphasising his point with the emphatic gestures and disarmingly warm smile which he is famous for, "and we will make at least two films a year. We are in the topmost league today, a Hollywood institution, and we intend to keep making films which people will remember for generations."

Tempered by Ivory's caution, however—"Ismail is always in a hurry, but I believe that it's better to creep like a tortoise and be ahead in the end"—current plans are kept to the more mundane level of actual projects in hand. Included among MIP's future films are Henry James' *The Bostonians*, which will hit the sets next June and a big-budget extravaganza based on John Masters' story, *The Deceivers*. Still keen to keep his links with India, Merchant plans a documentary on the jugglers and streetside entertainers of Bombay. But his emphasis, judging by current plans and projections, will remain on the West, where MIP's market lies. —CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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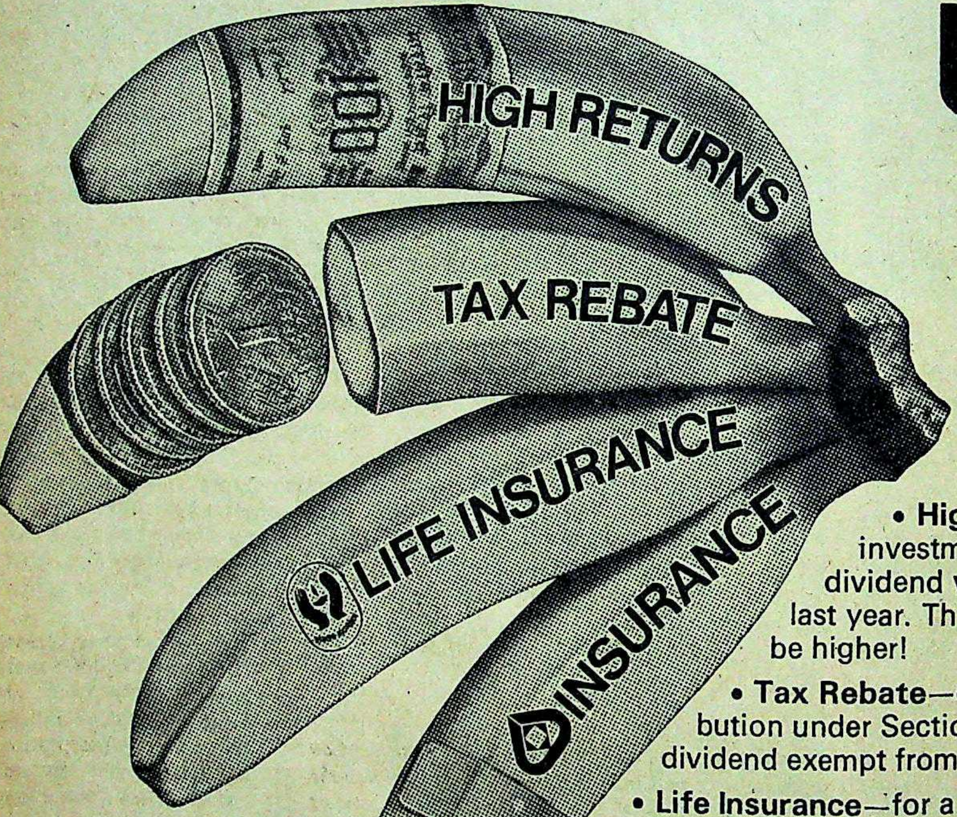

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e Village Voice

LAGE BY THE SEA
Family Story
DESAI

5; Pages: 156

A BOY of 12, a girl of 13, two small girls, a mother eaten up by anaemia, a father rotten with toddy, a coastal village still largely untouched by the temptations of city life, and the great city Bombay, only a handful of kilometres away by train. Such is The Village By The Sea, Anita rt novel for children, which last on her the 1982 *Guardian* award 's fiction, an annual award given f fiction for children by a British wealth author.

s story-telling skill is as keen as evocation of Hari, forced into aturity by the thought of three k mother and nothing to eat in aten shack he calls home, and his flight to the urban n search of a job, is e rare tales that both d adults can read

g Poverty: *Vil*s with a dedication Every morning Lila, e sister, carries flock in the foam of These are her private moments to be cheriuse after she has enjoyed the warmth g sun's rays as they back of her head, it e to go back to the coarse rice and dry eaten with chillies f a bush, to a heap r of the room which rumbling sound of breathing and also ever grinding poverty n about without the of self-pity it is i manages this minor ough language that t as the life it des-

et, this kind of existence cannot continue, as Hari knows only too well. But before he can go to Bombay, Bombay comes to him, in the form of the Thul-Vaishet fertiliser complex which the Gandhi-capped powers that be have decreed for Hari's little world. The advance guard is a contemptuous watchman who tells Hari: "It is going to be a whole city of factories. Factories, housing colonies, shopping centres, bus depots, railway heads, engineers and workers...."

Desai: sympathetic portrayal

All this means only one thing to Hari: a job. But his dreams of earning enough money to feed his family collapse when he learns that Bombay will bring its own educated, sophisticated sons to work in its mechanical wonder. Thul village, he learns, will be wiped out. Hari joins a group of Thul residents who are sailing to Bombay to protest to the mysterious masters at Mantralaya.

The village yokel comes to India's most powerful city. He listens to speakers denouncing the proposed complex, but understands very little of what they are saying. He walks all the way to a glittering apartment house where live the rich de Silvas, who own a house in Thul and employ Hari and his sisters for housework whenever they arrive for a holiday on the beach. Unfortunately, the de Silvas have gone to Thul.

Regenerative Influence: Hari is alone. Bombay, however, is not all stepmother, she is also mother and she works through one of the building's employees to lead the hungry boy to a ramshackle 'restaurant' where he eats his first full meal of the day. He stays on at the Sri Krishna Eating House, owned by the silent but kindly Jagu. He buys a postcard with money given by Mr Panwallah, the watchmender of Ding Dong Watchworks and sends it off to his mother. He learns to repair watches. He watches the monsoon hammer the city and turn the roads into rivers.

EXTRACT

"Have you?" asked the birdwatcher in astonishment. "Can you—d' you think you can mend my watch for me? I fell into the creek, you know," he chuckled, "and my watch hasn't worked since. Do you think you can get it to tick?" He took it out of his shirt pocket and handed it to Hari who took it eagerly. He could hardly believe that he was being asked to do something for the great man who had spoken to him in Bombay and come to Thul to study the birds.

Taking the watch, he shook it gently and held it to his ear. "Water has got into the works, sir. It is very easy to clean and dry that—I did many during the monsoon in Bombay."

The birdwatcher was staring at him as he spoke as if he were a bird performing some wonderful and interesting act. Then he shot out of his chair, crying, "Adapt! Adapt!"

"What, sir?" asked Hari, puzzled. He did not know the word.

"Adapt-that is what you are going to do. Just as birds and animals must do if they are going to survive. Just like the sparrows and pigeons that have adapted themselves to city life and live on food leftovers and rubbish thrown to them in the streets instead of searching for grain and insects in the fields," he explained, "so you will have to adapt to your new environment."

"I don't think I know how to do that, sir," said Hari uncertainly.

"But, boy, you've just told me how you are going to do it. You are going to give up your traditional way of living and learn a new way to suit the new environment that the factor will create at Thul so as to survive. Yes, you will survive."

The peculiar regenerative influence of Bombay is at work elsewhere: in Thul. The de Silvas take Hari's mother under their wing, transporting her to the hospital. By another miracle, Hari's father gives up drinking and tends to his wife in the hospital. Money starts coming in. So much so, that when Hari returns with money in his pocket and a skill in his hands, he finds not a family crying for succour, but one back on its feet welcoming him with open arms.

Desai tells this story, a fairy-tale almost, in English that is lucid, and evocative of the hopes, the fears, the smells and the sounds of a little fishing village getting ready for greater things. The descriptions—of the hut, of birds, of a mongoose hunt, of the launching of a new boat, of a storm—are precise but never pedantic. *Village* is a stylistic triumph that matches the victory of a boy and a girl of whose grit pulled them through.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

Profile In Courage

POEMS OF GITANJALI
Oriel Press
Price: £5.95 (Rs 100); Pages: 155

POEMS
OF GITANJALI

ONE AUGUST day six years ago, a girl of 16 died of cancer in a hospital in Bombay. Several months later, her mother began to find and collect a number of poems that the girl had written and hidden in her pain-racked solitude. The poetry editor of a distinguished weekly published some of them and was overwhelmed by the "incredible response". Some weeks later, a Calcutta businessman visiting Bombay was sauntering along a beach near his hotel and picked up a torn sheet of paper which turned out to be the page with the dead girl's poems. He got in touch with the poetry editor; later, the sheaf of poems was passed to the publisher in England, who sent them to a reader. Said the reader: "I had to stop reading, because my eyes were full of tears...".

'Born in Meerut on 12th June 1961, Died in Bombay on 11th August 1977', Gitanjali took her name from Rabindranath Tagore's book. In a preamble to her posthumous offering, she prays, "Oh! help me God/I so live that.../I live up to that name". She did, all through this 110-poem chronicle of solitary suffering, of a faith that grew stronger as the body weakened, of a peace that enveloped an unusually sensitive mind even as storms of pain tore through her being.

Wise Talent: Disease may have honed an already considerable talent, or perhaps it was the terrible loneliness of her condition that urged her on, for each and every one of these poems testifies to Gitanjali's talent and simple wisdom. "Not that I am proud/Not that I am a non-believer/But I long stopped begging/For mercy," she says quietly in one. In another, she talks to God: "I seek you/For your healing touch/When I am in pain/And wish so much to thank you/When you take the pain away...."

Suffering and the acceptance of suffering was this child's world and she brought that world to paper with all the clarity of innocence and all the heightened understanding of premature experience. She knew she was going to die, but: "Why should I be sad/If flowers can die/Who are so lovely to behold/So beautiful an Then, who am I?" The short pas "Lucky are those/Who got to lie awake—in the dark and stumb the bitter sweet memories/Of hood...."

THE HARP

I am being used
by God like a
harp.
One moment
He caresses me
like a fond child,
next minute
He grasps me firmly
and strikes.

A sharp quick blow
that wrings me with
pain,
torturing me by
pulling at my
heart-strings
in vain.
And just when I am
about to snap,
He rests my head
with warmth on His chest.
Softly and tenderly
He holds me to His heart
and wipes away my tears
to replace them with...
laughs.

From **NOTHING IS UNIMPORTANT**

Does early death come
As a punishment?
Or
Does it come too late,
For those who are tortured
By incurable pain?
Is death really cruel?
Or
Is it merciful?

Why do we shun death?
Haven't we known about death?
Doesn't death follow life?
It sometimes
Over-takes us, and
Sometimes, walks sluggishly
Behind.

From **THEIR EYES HELD NO PROMISE**

The night
Of the storm
Held me
In the grip of fear.

It was not so much
My own pain and suffering
But their blood-drained
Faces that stared
Into the space.

Their eyes held no promise
And looked beyond me
Not once daring
To meet my
Dying probing eyes,

Loved ones crowd the poems mother who showers "blessings th Lullabye". A "Daddy" who "L about/His Bul-bul/That she chirp make him feel swell". A brother, a dog called Micky, another call bird with a broken leg called Osc day Dress' which Gitanjali never cause an ambulance took her home, never to return, when sh just before she was to dress for he party.

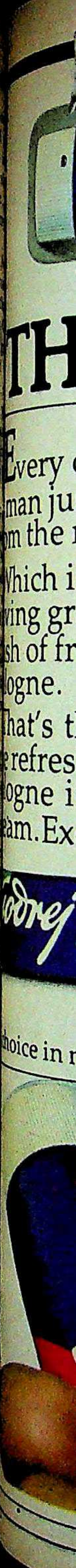
Deep Faith: And, of course, G sit in my solitude/And walk my lo Suddenly/I feel your hand in mine warm and secure." For the yo coming closer and closer to death the disease in its inexorable craw her flesh, God is more than a pr is a promise. Even death loses "Death is like a/Honoured guest not/On her own/She has His abide."

And yet, despite all the peop ting, solicitous, anxious, or simp ring, whose faces loomed over the Gitanjali must have been tormen liness. For there is nothing so iso sease and pain, which pull the suf from the noise and bustle of ever thy life. "The sound of silence is ring/my feeble heart/and soul," sa jali, "It's knawing at me,/day even/when people around/me But perhaps it was the unrelen that generated her best lines.

These were the articles of fai and maturity that Khushi Badr mother, found under mattresses, in ets of discarded skirts, inside cus in all the nooks and crannies tha ter, scribbling away furtively, cou Pritish Nandy, then poetry editor of *strated Weekly of India*, publish Calcutta businessman Gordon F up the page on a beach; finally, came to David Bacon and Bru Oriel Press. All royalties will go in India.

Gitanjali's physical journey August day over half a deca deadly invaders of her body w victory. But all that was endur structible escaped. "As for me I Tread the path/Where there are pain no regrets/Save/The etern is all I ask/Of my Creator."

—JAGAN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LATHER SHAVING CREAM

THE SHAVING GRACE:

Every day, day after day.
man just can't get away
m the routine of shaving.
Which is why he needs a
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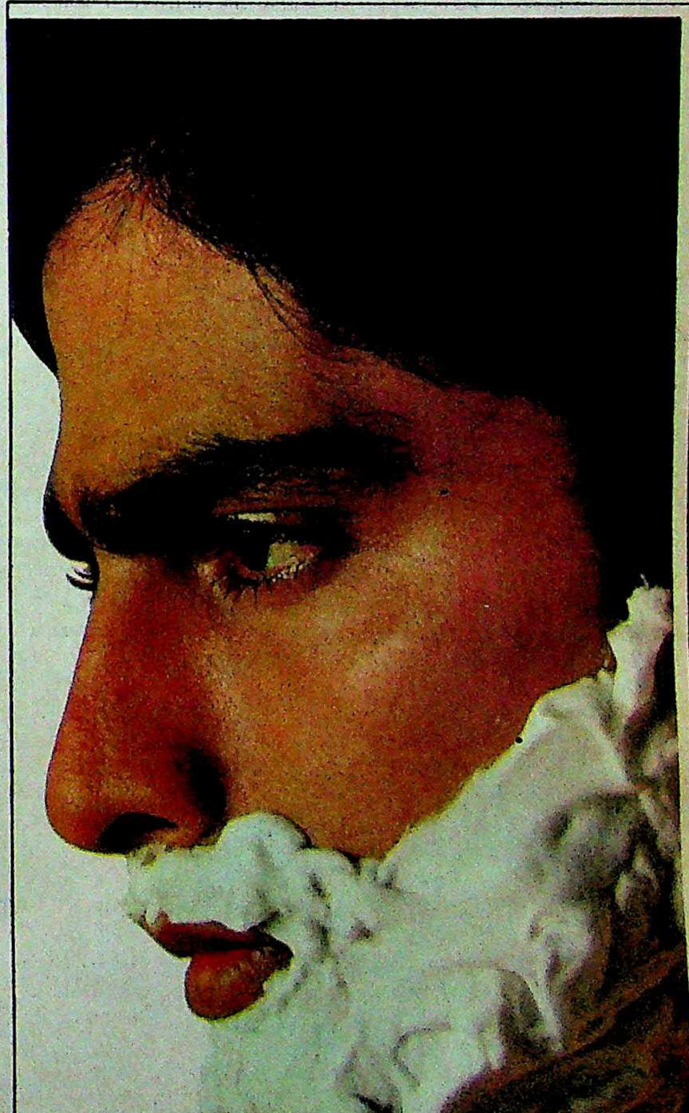
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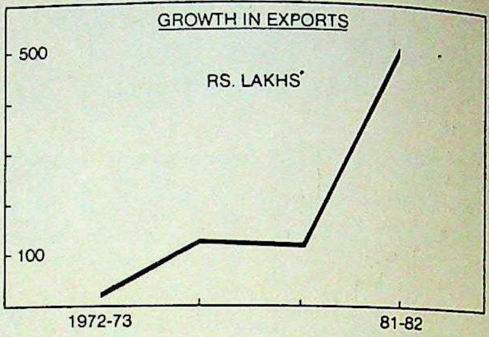

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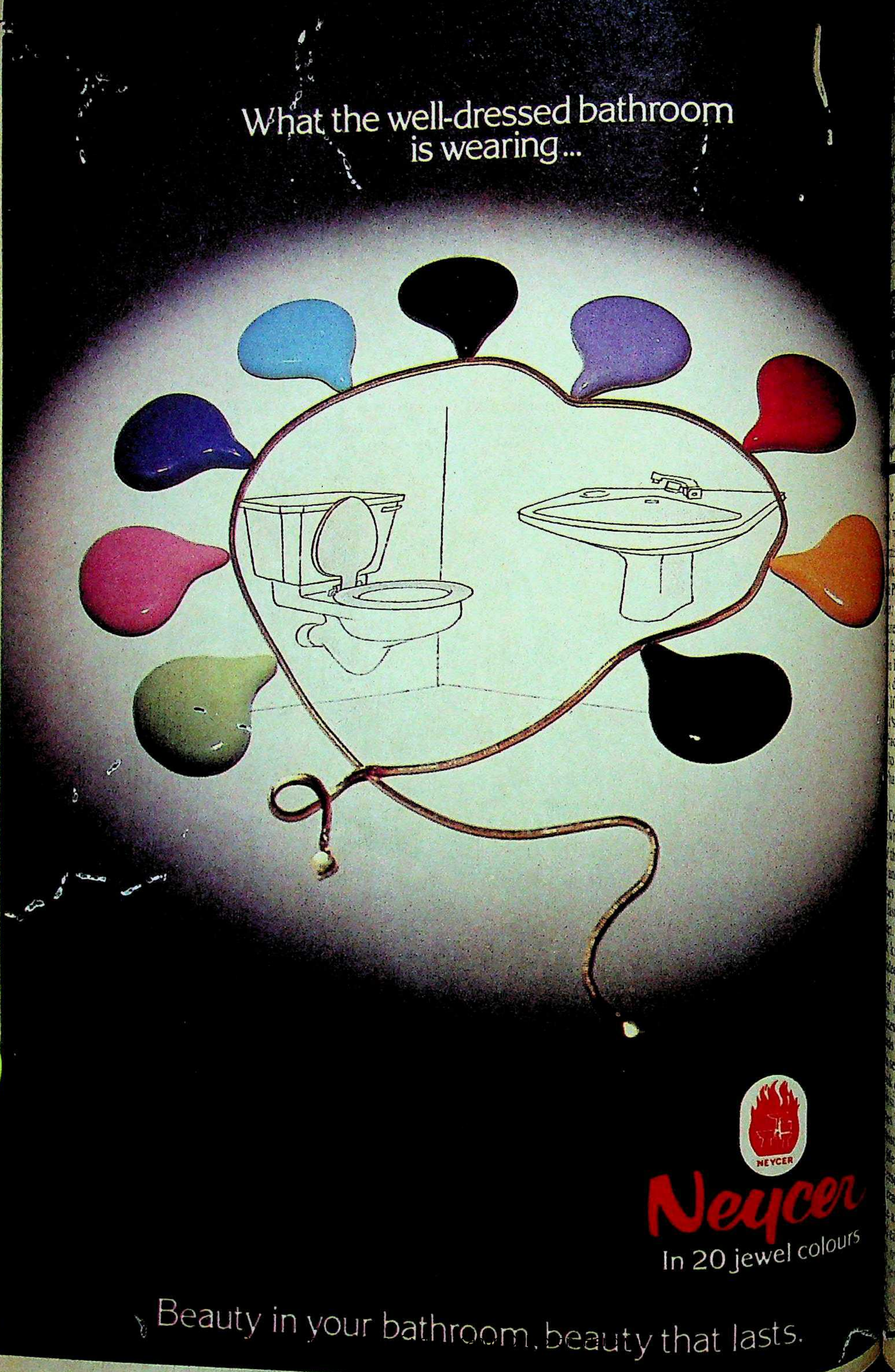
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D BY FLUTES
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ing House
; Pages: 223

"PEOPLE always *pass* through Madhya Pradesh: no one ever gets off to have a look at it." It is a lament that is heard often. But one person who did—and have a fairly close look too—is Dom Moraes. And, by the time he packed his bags to return home to had travelled some 27,000 km on roads that invite certain back rite the first book of its kind ssioned by a state government. has been a focus of controversy Pradesh: firstly because Moraes, was assigned the task to write he barely knew, and secondly e considerable expense that was him during his stay there.

difficult region to put between India can boast of culture and seems to be all concentrated in desh. There are tribals in Chha- wouldn't hurt a fly; there are bua who would come to blows

Compass: And everywhere there who have never ventured past the their home districts. They don't d outsiders rarely visit them— on at a comfortable pace that ster than that of the durable A villager in Raigarh distict know that Bhopal is the state ed, he might even be blissfully its very existence. Twenty-six its formation, this largest of s is still looking for the emo- which will tie it into a unified earch for an identity goes on.

on Madhya Pradesh, therefore, sibly lay claim to homogeneity. has wisely chosen to relate an account which covers most (including wildlife). The con- search is carefully concealed so ading is enjoyable and rarely author takes the reader through at a gentle pace which never hectic travels. For the most comes very close to being poetic, even if the form adopted is prose.

Moraes's 24th book and his fourth on an Indian place—after Bombay, Goa and Karnataka—moves from prehistoric man in Madhya Pradesh to princes before the merger; from tribal customs to neglected archaeological sites; from wildlife (including a pair of antelopes in a rest-house's room for two) to industry; from bureaucrats to culture; from family planning to tourism.

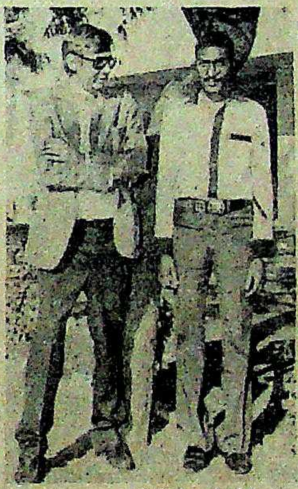
Ravaged Countryside: Moraes gets off the mark by writing about the state's history and of the artistic remains of that litter the countryside, watched over by "stray dogs and trees". Their numbers dwindle over the years as antique hunters relentlessly take their toll. According to one expert, more than half the illegally acquired pieces of temple art in India come from Madhya Pradesh.

He has devoted a large portion of his book to write about tribals who constitute nearly a fourth of the state's population. He mentions their political situation which is a kind of domestic colonialism, and of the attempts to "civilise" them. No one reflects this attitude as well as the principal of a school plagued by the high drop-out rate of tribal students. He tells the author in disgust: "Only if you ensure that they exercise less freedom will tribals be able to live properly. The adults should be disciplined as their children are in school. We must change their whole society."

Says he: "At present, the story of the state is of unanswered needs and untapped resources." Sixty princely states went into Madhya Pradesh and few of them were bothered about developing basic facilities so that, when Independence came, rails, roads and electricity were practically non-existent. The infrastructure is still in a bad way, progress not having been helped by the vast spread of the state. It continues to present a classic example of backwardness even though it supplies 39 per cent of the country's dolomite, all its diamonds, more than a quarter of its bauxite, nearly a quarter of its iron, coal, limestone and phosphorite, and 15 per cent of its manganese ore. The output of the industrial sector is negligible in the national context and well over half the people live below the poverty line.

Answered By Flutes is particularly delightful when Moraes writes about his encounters with people: a self-made doctor in Pachmarhi (offering a magic potion of ground tortoise shell, wild cauliflower, fruit and the bark of a tree to cure piles); in holy Amarkantak, a beaming *sanyasi* who resembles Santa Claus; a prostitute in Ujjain; the stunned survivors of a dacoit village in Chambal valley; a tribal youth in Bastar. They are common people; but suddenly they are no longer ordinary.

Particularly absorbing are the author's encounters with two men, one of them in Jabalpur, and the other in dacoitland. The first is Kumar, son of Verrier Elwin, whom Moraes came to know through his father. Verrier, who was Nehru's adviser on tribal affairs, lived a large part of his life in Madhya Pradesh. Moraes traces Kumar down to find a broken man, a walking skeleton without a hope. Before Moraes can get Kumar aid from the state Government, Kumar is dead.



Moraes with Lachchi: absorbing encounters

The other man is Lachchi—a young man who, following a land dispute, joins Malkhan Singh's gang. Moraes meets him in a police station to interview him, is convinced of his innocence and takes up his case, first for acquittal, and later for rehabilitation.

There are, however, two aspects that mar Moraes's considerable efforts. In addition to 223 pages, the book contains 110 colour plates, most of them of poor quality: if one is overexposed, the next is out of focus; the colours appear faded in one and gaudy in the other. Moreover, they are utterly devoid of feeling.

Cold Statistics: Secondly, Moraes seems to remember his commitment to the state Government rather abruptly and he gets down to the business—it reads like business—of piling figure on figure. Fortunately, this lasts for only a few pages.

It is not so much the subject as his manner of treatment which breaks the rhythm of his style. Writing of the power deficit, he could easily have met a farmer who suffered because his electric pump let him down; talking of medical facilities, he could have interviewed a woman who had lost her eyesight instead of remarking that "one in every 50-odd people was curably blind, a very high percentage". As Moraes has shown so effectively elsewhere in the book, it is people who are warm and alive. Statistics are cold and dead and better left alone in a book of this type.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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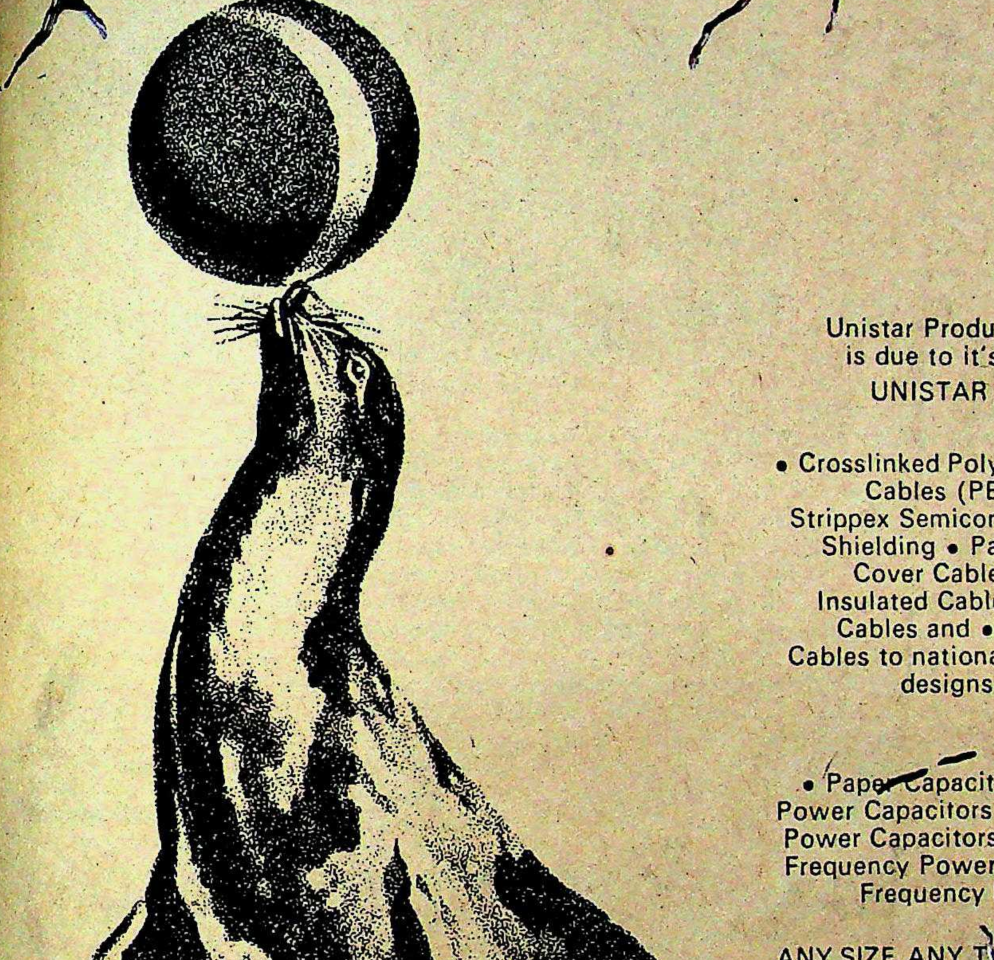

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ASIAD STADIA

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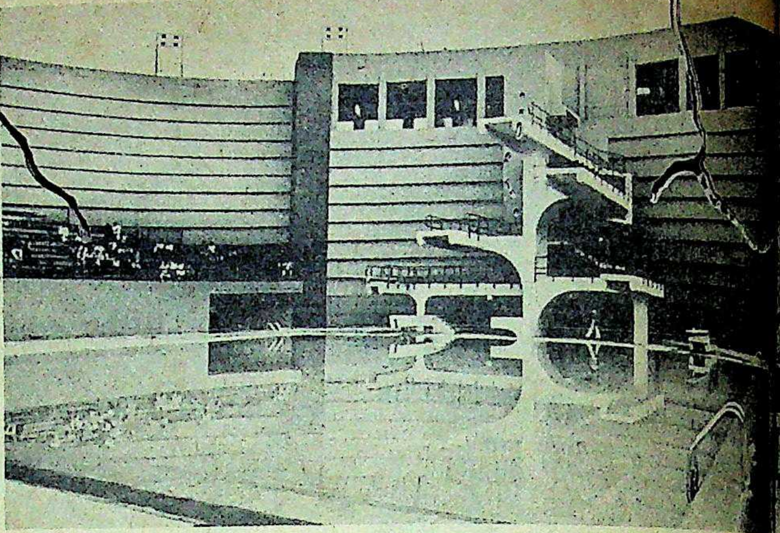
ONCE they resounded to the cheers of packed crowds. Today, the stadia built at such enormous expense for the IX Asiad are echoingly empty, and maintenance expenditure estimated at half the country's sports budget for the year is being used up to keep them in perfect condition—and idle. Last fortnight, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium—75,000 seats and 641 rooms spread over 110 acres—was used for the first time since the November Games when veteran Asian athletes sweated on the track with only a couple of hundred spectators in the stands. The fully air-conditioned Indraprastha Indoor Stadium, which can seat 25,000, has been used for just one sports meet by the Taekwondo Sports Federation for two days in February. The Talkatora pool complex has been lifeless since December 1982.

Perhaps the most pathetic plight is that of the Talkatora pool, where not a single swimmer has turned up since the Games. Says Satya Narayana, chief engineer, New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) and in charge of the complex: "For two weeks after the Games we kept the water heated hoping that someone would come to use it. But no one did." The heating has been turned off but the water continues to be filtered.

When the capital's most popular football tournaments—the DCM and the Durand—were held some time ago, the venue continued to be the Ambedkar Stadium (capacity: 18,000) rather than the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium where the Asiad football matches were held. A spokesman for the Sports Department said that this was because the fans would have had "transport problems". Says R.K.Gupta, president of the Delhi Football Association: "What to talk of using the Nehru Stadium, after the Asiad renovation of the Ambedkar Stadium the rates have been hiked here as well, making it impossible to use it for the football league matches as in the past."

High Charges: One reason for the empty stadia is the forbidding rates. At present, only the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which built the Rs 26 crore indoor stadium and now runs it, has fixed rates for its charge: sports bodies must pay Rs 39,000 per day in summer and Rs 15,000 per day in winter; government agencies and charitable organisations Rs 1 lakh per day in summer and Rs 76,000 per day in winter, commercial organisations Rs 1.52 lakh per day in summer and Rs 1.28 lakh per day in winter.



The Talkatora diving pool: financial burden

The DDA engineer in charge of the stadium considers these rates reasonable; says he: "If you consider my indirect costs which include interest rates at 10 per cent and depreciation at 2 per cent, then the costs work out to Rs 2.5 crore a year. To break even on my indirect costs I would have to charge Rs 1.25 lakh a day; if you add direct charges then it becomes necessary to charge Rs 2 lakh a day." He says that the stadium's maintenance costs work out to around Rs 50 lakh a year and electricity and water charges to another Rs 40 lakh. Forty people in three shifts look after the security—the contract has been given to a private firm.

With such high maintenance costs the rates have to be high, although the DDA has thoughtfully offered half-rates to those using only half the stadium. But so far, there have been few takers. Besides the Taekwondo Sports Federation, six non-sports bodies have hired the hall, three of them for film star 'nite' shows. Asks V.K. Malhotra, president of the Indian Archery Federation: "With rates as high as these, which sports federation would think of using the stadium?" The steep rates for users not connected with sports also make it unlikely that there will ever be regular bookings. The chief engineer notes that whether the stadium is used or not a minimum charge has in any case to be paid to the electricity undertaking as the stadium consumes 6,000 kw in summer and 1,500 kw in winter when in full use.

Another reason why the stadia are unused is that the equipment and playing area are considered too sophisticated to be used by all comers. The National Stadium was refitted with astroturf which requires a special watering system; says K. Basu, director, maintenance, Special Organising Committee (SOC): "Ordinary teams can't be allowed to use astroturf. It is like giving a si for Ravi Shankar to a fresher." A man for the Sports Department sa organisers of the hockey national cently in Meerut did not ask for th perhaps because it would have mea of special shoes, special balls and mina would have been required astroturf has been used for the In men's hockey team practice matc

In the same way, joggers, ath gymnasts cannot use the Nehru S Observes S.K. Chawla of the Cen Works Department (CPWD), supe engineer of the stadium: "It would rity risk and in any case one has that special shoes with spikes no m mm long are used so that the trac spoilt." The Delhi University gro enclosed within a tall fence for the and archery events—not very pop in India—and are now out of bou joggers and gymnasts who used th in the past.

Swollen Costs: But the stadia h kept in condition whether they a not. Chawla estimates that the J Nehru Stadium would cost about R a year to maintain, assuming that i active use 120 days in a year. He ex when the stadium is in use, e electricity, water and staff incre mously—often, extra staff has to b ted. Not included in the estimate men of the Central Reserve Police F guard vital installations such as th towers, the public address syste score-board.

In fact, Sports Minister B replying to a question in Parlia ruary, admitted that the mainte the operational expenses of just th stadia and the swimming pools, w

The Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium: high maintenance costs

1.2 crore a year. Later, at a Sports meeting on March 2, the caretaker ions—DDA, CPWD and NDMC— d to submit revised estimates for g the stadia according to what a n calls "international standards". l cost of maintenance and limited l usage then works out about Rs 2.5 crore, for just the big three. If the other Asiad legacies are added, the cost rises to a whopping Rs 3 crore.

Big Drain: Compared to national sports budgets, the stadia maintenance costs are staggering. The national expenditure on sports was just Rs 2.69 crore in 1980–81, Rs 3.06 crore in 1981–82 and Rs 4.90 crore in 1982–83. For the year 1983–84 the budget has been hiked to Rs 6.36 [illegible] amount allotted for the upkeep of the three sports institutes at Patiala, Bangalore and Calcutta is Rs 3 crore which is about the same as the maintenance cost of the Asiad stadia. As against this, grants to various state sports councils for 1983–84 will be around Rs 80 lakh, and grants to national sports federations around Rs 90 lakh.

The Government has also to work out the ticklish question of who is to ultimately manage the stadia. At present the agencies that built them are doing the job on the understanding that the expenses will eventually be reimbursed. The SOC, which was in charge of sports grounds during the Asiad, says it is no longer concerned. Says K.S. Bains, additional secretary-general, SOC: "We will be winding up 90 per cent of our operations by the end of March. It is no longer our problem."

The hope is that eventually a sports authority will come into being to mother the facilities. But, as the debate continues, it is now clear that when the grey pachyderms from Kerala left Delhi after taking part in the Asian Games ceremonies, they left some spotless white brethren behind.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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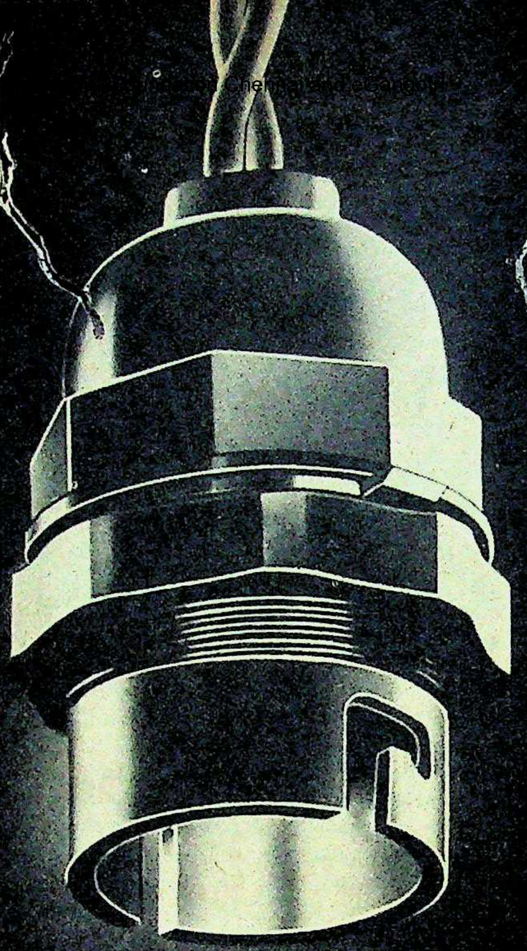

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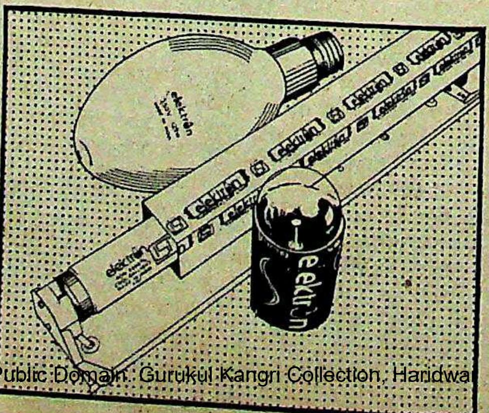

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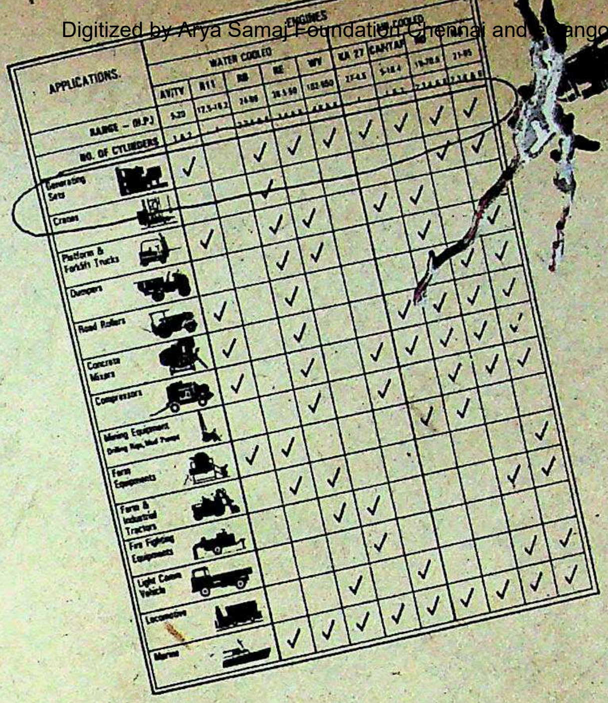

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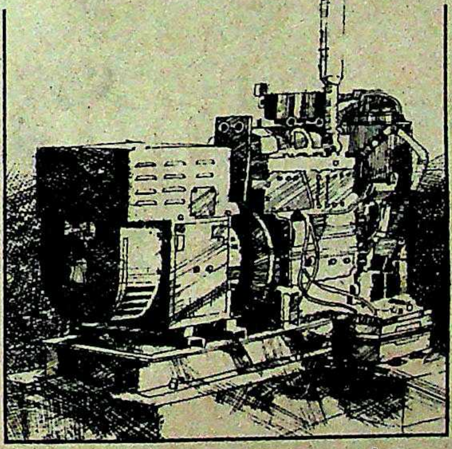

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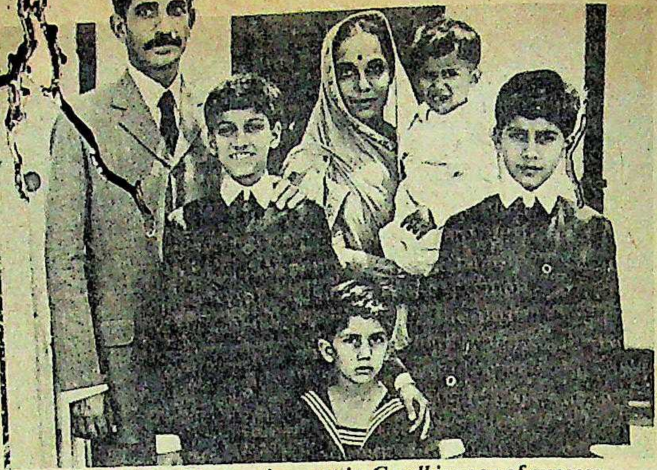
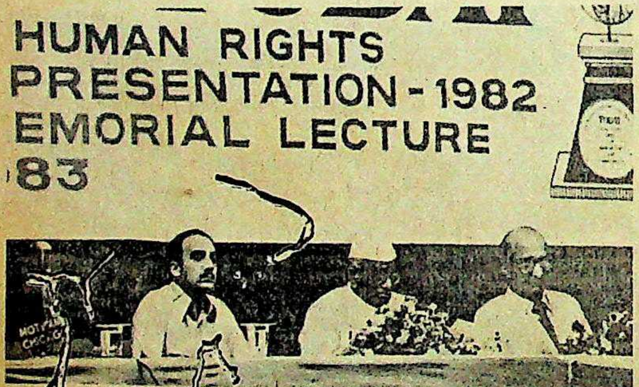
[illegible] on the farm, he has been chafing at the bit ever since he relinquished tenancy rights to Rashtrapati Bhavan eight months ago. And, last fortnight, in his first public speech after retirement, former President **Sanjiva Reddy** obviously had plenty of steam to let off. In a scathing speech on the occasion of the presentation of the People's Union for Civil Liberties-INDIA TODAY Journalism for Human Rights Award in Bombay awarded to INDIA TODAY's **Chaitanya Kalbag** by an 11-member jury of eminent personalities. Reddy had some caustic comments to make on Mrs Gandhi and Centre-state relations. "This mother-in-law business from New Delhi must stop," he stormed, adding that states should no longer be treated like "municipalities". He ended his speech by saying: "I shall now go back to my farm and not open my mouth for another eight months."



Hattangady and supporting cast in *Gandhi*: year of success



(From left) Shourie, Reddy and Palkhivala: scathing criticism

In fact, it proved an apt occasion for steam-letting as **Nani Palkhivala,** jurist and public speaker par excellence, in an earlier speech, chalked out the four crises facing the nation as that of character, identity, underutilisation of human and natural resources and inadequacy of administration and leadership. "The need of the hour," he commented, "is moral and not political leadership," adding that so far there had been "too much government and too little administration, too many civil servants but too little service, too many laws but very little justice."

It was another accolade for *Gandhi*. As the momentum grows for the movie to reap a harvest of Oscars at month's end, **Rohini Hattangady**, the Bombay stage actress who played Kasturba was, last fortnight awarded the British Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in London. Nominations for the award included Jane Fonda in *On Golden Pond*, Candice Bergen in *Gandhi* and Maureen Stapleton in *Reds*. Stapleton and Hattangady won the award jointly, which was presented by American actor Robert Wagner.

"It was really exciting," says Hattangady, "because the way the nominations are made no one knows who has won the award till the star on stage opens a golden envelope and pulls out the winner's name."

Hattangady, whose career is surging ahead after the *Gandhi* role is presently working on a Marathi adaptation of *Medea* by Sadanand Rege. Directed by her husband Jaydev, the play will open in Bombay at the end of the month. At the same time, she has three films on hand, but is "simply thrilled" by her award. Said she: "It was a big year for India in London since Jennifer Kapoor was nominated for the Best Actress award in *36 Chowringhee Lane*. Unfortunately, she didn't win it."

■ Her face is straight out of ancient Greek drama, strong and intense; but her speech is completely contemporary and outspoken. Pushing 60 this year, Greek actress **Melina Mercouri** (*Never on Sunday*, *Topkapi* and *A Dream of Passion*) is still a fiery blonde socialist, mixing politics and performance to a fine pitch. As Greece's minister for culture and sciences in the Government of Andreas Papandreou, Mercouri stopped for a three-day visit in New D
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Mercouri: political passion

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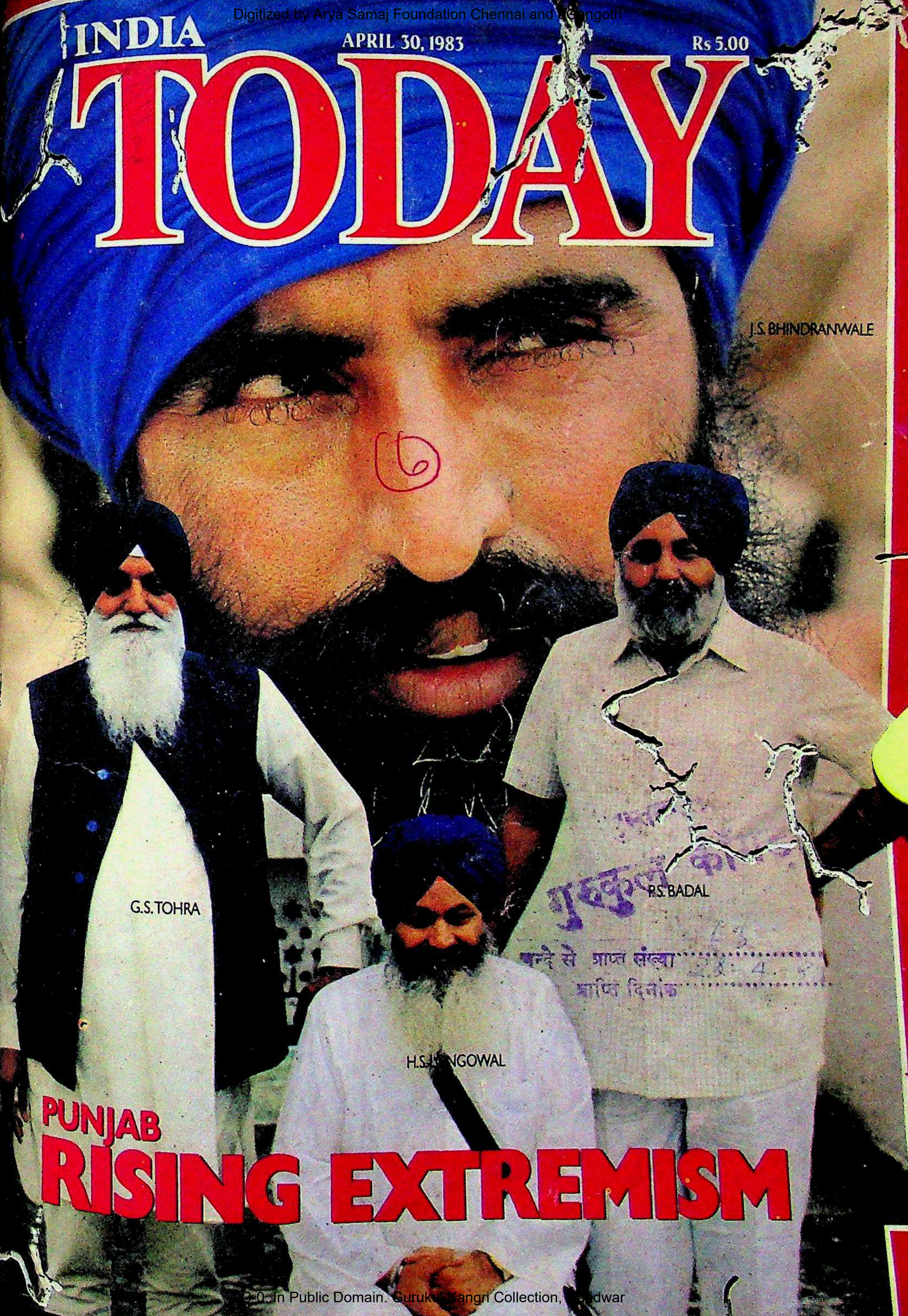
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OTOGRAPHS BY RAGHU RAI

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Punjab:

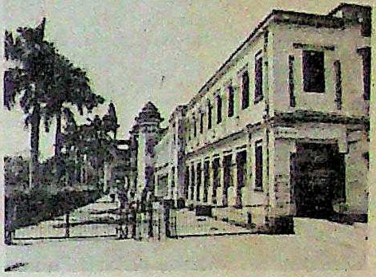
One of the most prosperous and dynamic states in the country, Punjab is today convulsed by an agitation, spearheaded by the Akali Dal, that has brought religion and politics together in an explosive mix. The state Government finds it increasingly difficult to cope with the alarming rise of Sikh extremism, and the ominously widening gulf between the Hindu and Sikh communities. As passions rise to fever-pitch the Centre gropes for a way to stem the rot in the state.

Cover Story • Page 16

Rajneesh Foundation:

The saffron brigade of the self-styled Bhagwan Rajneesh is once again in the thick of controversy, this time in Oregon, United States, where they have set up a commune called Rajneeshpuram. In addition, the US Government seems reluctant to allow the Bhagwan to stay in the country.

Religion • Page 96



Varanasi:

Curious things are going on at the Radiotherapy Department of the Banaras Hindu University's Institute of Medical Sciences. An alarming number of women treated there for cancer of the cervix have returned with complications that have sometimes resulted in a painful death.

Medicine • Page 148

Orissa:

Ghumsar Udayagiri is a picturesque little village of Adivasis and Harijans in a remote part of Orissa. For years, its attractive women have been the prey of petty officials who marry them, stay with them for a short time, and then leave never to return. Lately, however, the women have been resisting.

Special Feature • Page 110

Finance:

India's largest private savings company, the Calcutta-based Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Ltd. is under attack from many sides on a variety of charges. With the savings of 12 million people at stake, the barrage of allegations reached a noisy zenith last fortnight.

Business • Page 139

UAE

Indian organisations are getting rough treatment from the authorities in the United Arab Emirates. Educational, social and business set-ups are at the receiving end of measures aimed ultimately at making life difficult for them so that they pack up and leave. A close look at this disquieting trend.

Globe-trotting • Page 74

INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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FOR THE FORTNIGHT APRIL 16-30, 1983

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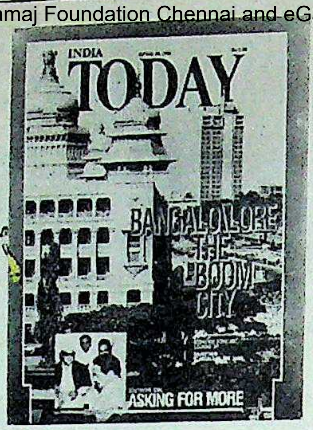

THE BIG BOOM

The article "Bangalore—The Boom City" (April 15) was very informative. The fact that Bangalore is erasing its past can be further proved by the proposal to demolish the legendary high court building.

Bangalore *Sathya*

■ Even after living in Bangalore for 19 years, I did not know so much about the city as your story told me.

Bombay *V. Prasanna*

■ If Bangalore has to have high-rise buildings, they should be constructed only on the outskirts of the city. One must learn from the experience of Bombay. High-rise buildings are not only eyesores but disturb ecological balance, creating congestion.

Bangalore *Dilip Gadkari*

■ While a certain amount of industrialisation is essential for a city, the amount that has taken place in Bangalore is disastrous. The result is that with trees felled, the people of Bangalore have faced the hottest March in 50 years. Pollution is at an all-time high.

Bangalore *Vikas Anand*

■ The anatomy of Bangalore in "The Boom City" was superb. The city was once called the air-conditioned city but the weather is even hotter than the sweltering heat of Madras. The unbridled expansion of industries and mushrooming skyscrapers have made the salubrious climate of this cosmopolitan garden city a forgotten thing of the past. Besides this the imported culture of the West has dealt a death-blow to its unique culture. Bangaloreans have just cause to regret the growth of the city.

Bangalore *Ramanand Sharma*

■ The great Seth Walchand Hirachand was the unique pioneer who set up manufacture of aircraft, ships and cars. He did not start HAL for repairs of planes as mentioned in the story. HAL started doing that only after it was nationalised.

Bombay *K.K. Banerjee*

HAL *was started with the inten manufacturing aircraft. If manufactu two aircraft before the Government took it over in 1982. was only aft when the US Air Force took over the ment that it was used as an over station.*

UNBREAKABLE BOUNDS

"The Burden of Freedom" (Ap gives an excellent account of the mis Congress(I) governments. The 20-poi gramme has become a vehicle to exp poor. Had they been sincere, we wo have so many bonded labourers in I

Arrah *Param Han*

ACTION STATIONS

"Congress(I): Bracing For A made interesting reading. But it is tunate that the Congress(I), claiming people's party, in touch with the mass only when the elections come aroun

Bombay *Husain E. Be*

PARTY TIME

While agreeing with the pessimi sessment of Maneka Gandhi's polit ture (April 15) one must at the sam point out that Mrs Indira Gandhi al to power without any national plan. she simply bamboozled the masses name of her father and offered soc Now that the socialism cooked by h produced a stale broth, her daughter wants to serve a different recipe.

Calcutta

■ Congratulations to Maneka Gan launching a new political party with th point programme. However, with t litical atmosphere in the country, he cannot make a successful beginni present, it can be a party of compassio

Madras *K.V. Raja*

A CLARIFICATION

In our issue of April 30, 198 published an article on Maharashtra e 'State of Distress' in which we referred Satish Pednekar, then Chairman o Zonal Cement Allotment Committee slum lord of sorts and said that dur tenure his company Manish Builder structed 150 buildings.

On further inquiry we find th Pednekar is not a slum lord of any kin that he has nothing to do with M Builders or buildings constructed by We also find that no cement was allo them by Mr Pednekar by any im means. We regret the error.

INDIA
TODAY
INDIA TAKES CHARGE

dering the general tendencies of
and the media ("India Takes
March 31) to shower encomiums
Gandhi on her being elected the
of the Non-aligned Movement
if some extraordinary honour had
wed on the most deserving person,
ke to ask, whether the NAM, having
w Delhi, could have meant anyone
ted other than the hostess or could
een Mrs Gandhi if the meet had
ace at Baghdad as originally

K.R. Devadoss

fails to understand why there is so
phoria in this country over the NAM
thing of note has been achieved
e passing of the leadership to
ands.

K. Baskar

oes to the credit of India's diplo-
noeuvring that explosive issues like
ea, the Iran-Iraq war, Palestine
anistan didn't impede the summit
gs.
a has the difficult task of having the
ility of managing NAM affairs for
three years, but Mrs Gandhi as the
s the capability to steer clear of the
er blocs.

Geetha Balasubramaniam

Indira Government has followed in
eps of Fidel Castro in keeping the
hea seat vacant. In fact, by doing so,
e served the purpose of their Soviet
by bringing the status of Heng
regime at par with that of the
led by Prince Sihanouk, who is, in
rightful occupant of the seat.

Nirendra Nagar

Gandhi has once again boosted
image. Though this show may not
ch to the superpowers, it will pro-
mouthpiece for the Third World.

S. Saxena

NAM is not factual. The members are aligned with each other and actually constitute a third party.

Colombo *Harnold Colne*

■ It was sad to note that while Assam burnt and Punjab faced tremendous tension, the Centre was busy making elaborate arrangements for NAM.

Hamirpur *[illegible].S. Patial*

■ Your coverage of the summit was disappointing. You should have supplemented the article with many more colour photographs.

Bangalore *Gopal Rajan*

■ It would have been a fitting finale had NAM issued the draft declaration, proclaiming 'unity among its members and their desire to work for world peace', on April 1.

Chhatarpur *Satyajit Pratap*

■ The non-aligned club, as it stands today, cannot solve any issues. The members do not have any defined goals. As long as they are underdeveloped and dependent on others, their appeals will fall on deaf ears.

Muzaffarnagar *Anil Kumar Arora*

■ The coverage of the NAM was superb.

Miraj *P.S. Pawar*

■ We wish that a similar international conference takes place in Madras so that, like New Delhi, it is also beautified.

Madras *V.N. Narayanaswamy*

■ While Delhiites were happy about the city's face-lift, the fact that hoteliers benefited, the summit held little interest for the rest of the country.

Calcutta *Mihir Bain*

■ Your photograph showing 'Zia at Friday prayers at Delhi' (March 31) is a stark reminder of the fact that foreign Muslims enjoy privileges in India which are denied to Pakistan's Hindu and Sikh populations.

Houston *Arvind Ghosh*

SAD PLIGHT

I was moved to read about the plight of Nihal Singh ("The Price Of Honesty", March 31). It can happen to anyone pitted against a corrupt system.

Srinagar *M.H. Jowher*

■ I hope that the article on Nihal Singh has an effect on the Government and justice is done to him, and others like him.

Goa *G.D. Shanbhogne*

FOR THE RECORD

The name of Sridhar Chillal of Pune in "Nailed, at last" (Indianotes, March 31) has already appeared in the Guinness Book of Records.

Warangal *Sanjeev Choudhary*

VICIOUS CIRCLE

I hope our 'planners' will take a look at "A Runaway Economy" (March 31). It is depressing that the post-Independence state of India's economy still remains dismal. Surprisingly while the stagnant economy was limping through the years, the Government didn't bother to curb its own expenditures. What the country needs today are imaginative people at the top who can take bold decisions to lift the economy out of its present morass. It is a pity that after three decades, our planners still attribute our economic setback to "global conditions" and ask for aids and grants from other countries. Who will break away from this vicious circle?

Trivandrum *K. Balagopal*

■ Jay Dubashi rightly says that the Government has lost control over the fiscal affairs of the country. He, however, forgot to mention the mounting defence expenditure which, at Rs 6,000 crore, constitutes 17 per cent of the budget. This is one avenue where spending can be reduced.

Calcutta *J. Mathew*

■ It was a perfect analysis of the Indian economy. The time is ripe to formulate a model on which the economy should be based. Present planning techniques have, by and large, a bureaucratic approach. True economics seldom finds a place in the plans. Though political will is the centre round which an economy revolves, yet it is equally true that economic theory cannot be sidetracked. The only flaw in the Indian economy is that it does not consider growth theory as an important tool-kit. Rather, mathematical approach goes into it.

Orissa *Bhaskar Parichha*

PRODIGAL PRODIGY

It is high time that the Government puts an end to its income tax claims and sees to it that Dr Teja ("Return of the Prodigal", March 31) gets the respect he deserves. It is not every day that a prodigy like him is born. India will surely gain a lot by his advice. The ships he purhased in the early '60s are real beauties even after almost 20 years. It was only after he showed us the way that we started buying sophisticated vessels. You will find the people who worked under the "Jayanti" banner praising the good old times to this day. This loyalty is apparent among both the officers and the crew members of the "Jayanti Shipping Co". We have lost precious years trying to pin him down. It is time we finally opened our eyes and

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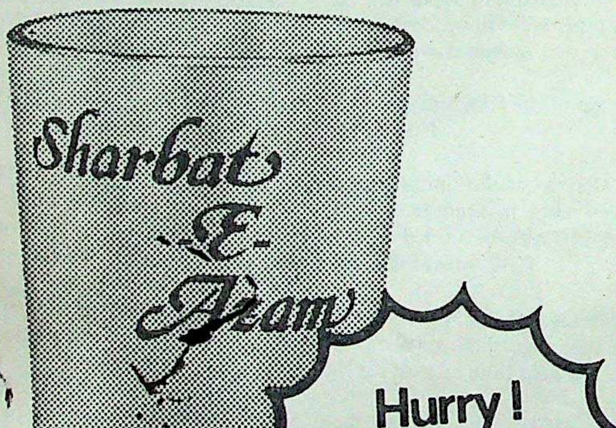
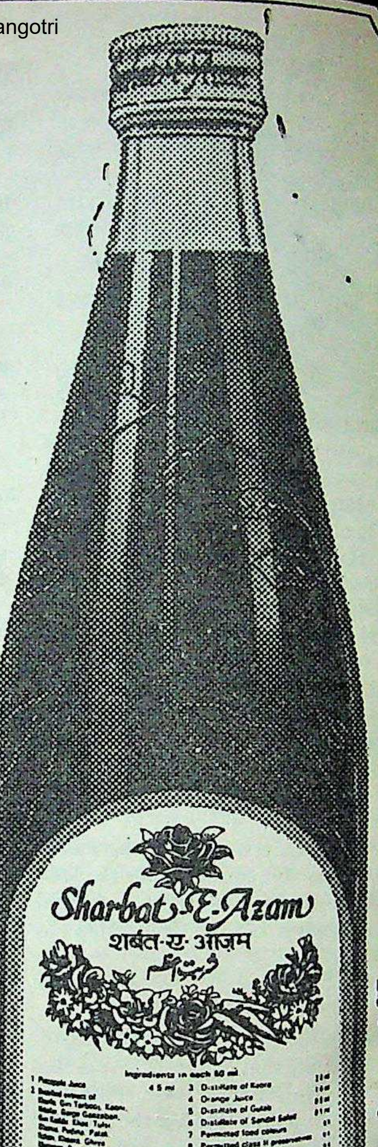

Sharbat-E-Azam

Hurry! Collect a set of glasses while you can!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him. *Shyamala Surendran*

to INDIA TODAY for presenting of Dharma Teja in a rare

Gargi

ticle on Dr Dharma Teja made reading. But the author failed to tice. On the one hand he glorified a shipping tycoon, nuclear physi- on the other, he titled the article of the Prodigal'. If the ent's insight does not permit him in intelligence, capability, com- fidence, fortitude, capacity, econ- financial wizardy, he should not pted such an article. But then, uld not prevent the power and Dr Teja from shining through.

Praveen Kumar

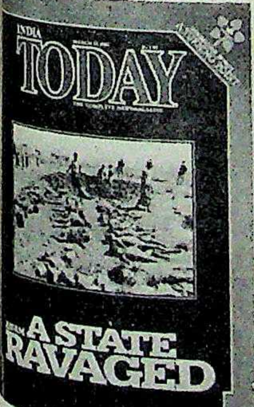
have over-indulged in your attack unfortunate soul that is Dharma ming the possibility that he is an , you should have been more to him after the ordeal he's been

Duleep Thomas

D TALENTS

Palkhivala's annual analysis of the dget has repeatedly exposed the ative nature of our economic po- sults of which are glaringly evident Judgement", March 31). It is a t Nani Palkhivala does not find a e actual formulation of the econ- print of our country. The nation is rived of the benefit of a brilliant iously for political reasons.

C.P. Belliappa



OLL TOLL

Gandhi's name would no doubt the Guinness Book of Records as st champion of democracy—and cost of bloodshed and human lives ("A State Ravaged", March 15).

Kanhangad *Haresh Shenoy*

■ Mrs Gandhi's inflammatory speeches delivered to the illegal Bangladeshi Muslims in Assam and her seemingly deliberate avoidance of native Assamese population is sure to erupt into a situation far worse than the one created in Kashmir by her father when he went to the UN, on the advice of Lord Mountbatten, and declared unilaterally his willingness to hold a plebiscite there.

Texas *A. Ghosh*

■ The Government could have avoided the man-made blood-bath by amending the Constitution. The prime minister is known for her overnight ordinances and constitutional changes. Are these only to keep her in power and not to prevent bloodshed in Assam?

Iran *Jaya P. Reddy*

■ I don't know what this country has done to deserve Mrs Gandhi. Her insensitivity and thoughtlessness have reached intolerable proportions. She doesn't even admit her mistake in holding the Assam elections.

Madras *V. Bhatt*

■ Humankind will never forgive those unscrupulous politicians, who, in order to fulfil their ambitions, decided to go through the elections in that ill-fated state. They virtually "engineered" the meaningless, bloody holocaust which followed.

Magadh *Pradeep Kumar*

■ It seems that neither the Government nor the agitators are interested in finding a solution to the Assam problem. Perhaps the Government is under the impression that the problem will dissolve with the passage of time.

Abohar *Kailash Chander Goyal*

■ The best photograph was the one in which Mrs Gandhi is shown covering her face. I wish she could be produced in a court of the people in the same manner for killing so many innocent people.

Assam *A.N. Singh*

■ Nowhere has there been a mention of illegal Nepali immigrants in the state. You make it sound as though the only illegal immigrants are Bangladeshis.

Guwahati *H.K. Sarma*

■ The Assam carnage has once again forced us to look at the face of democracy we uphold. It has once again exposed the shamelessness and vulnerability of our decadent system, where sycophancy and hypocrisy are the order of the day.

Calcutta *Dipankar Sen Roy*

■ Mrs Gandhi will always be condemned for the forced elections and the consequent holocaust which resulted in Assam. Never has the world seen such heinous decisions in the name of democracy.

Allahabad *Apoorva Misra*

FUNDAMENTALIST ISSUE

Ershad's behaviour in Bangladesh ("Uneasy Truce", March 15) clearly highlights Islam's inherent inability to treat minorities as equals. If Bangladesh goes Islamic, then Hindus and Buddhists in that country may have to migrate to India. It is a pity that so many lives were lost in order to liberate Bangladesh from the clutches of the Pakistani bigots and that no remedial measures were taken or even attempted by India to prevent the situation developing now.

New York *A. Govinda*

COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

I never thought a magazine could be read cover-to-cover until I came across the March 15 issue.

Calcutta *Tapan Kumar Basak*

BREAST IS BEST

The March 15 issue with the cover on Assam depicting dead children and the article on baby foods ("A Code of Misconduct") highlighting infant deaths shows how callous a society has become to children in general. Your sense of moral outrage on both issues was well conveyed, especially in the new editorial column.

Goa *Claude Alvares*

■ A survey of 100 homes in Jind, Haryana, showed that all mothers breast-fed their babies and bought no infant foods. Similar trends have been observed all over rural India and in small towns. In the metropolises, recent advertisements have, in fact, reinstated the otherwise dwindling faith in breast feeding. What could be gained by imposing a stricter form of legislation in a country, where breast feeding is a well established tradition?

Jind *Amita Pahwa*

■ It is inconceivable that a mother having milk in adequate quantities will deprive her baby of it. The simple fact is that a growing infant needs milk beyond what a mother can possibly produce, hence the need for a supplemented diet.

A doctor, in need of supplement, will feed her own baby with fresh milk (cow or buffalo) undoubtedly, in preference to canned baby foods.

Bangalore *Arun K. Nagarkatti*

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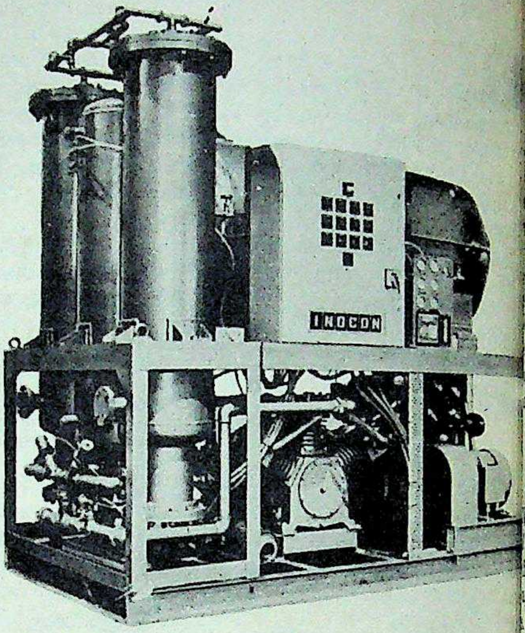

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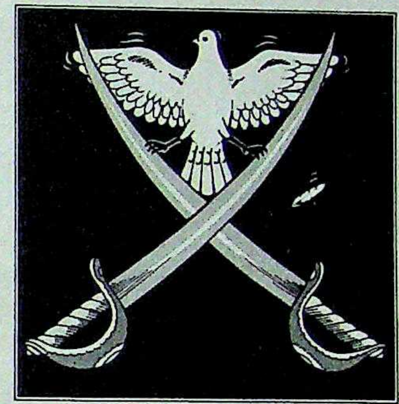
INDIA
TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

s not matter how you divide or subdi-
e or two, or three or four states. The
is that having done that, do you create
d cooperation amongst the people who
We attach more importance to a deci-
through goodwill than to the merely
ion, for logic is a very feeble and un-
stitute for goodwill. I would rather
ll and cooperation than logic."

Jawaharlal Nehru, December 1955



PPOSING sides in Punjab muster a
f logic. It is goodwill and coopera-
ey have lost. If Punjab isn't to go the
y, there is no alternative to purposeful, statesman like
Petty politics and drift have no place in this calculus. The
contain the most recent bout of the Akali agitation has
e movement towards extremism and drained national
e in the ability of Mrs Indira Gandhi's government to
qual to the Punjab challenge.

s the moment to recall the essence of Nehru's words.
e has been already lost, but it is far from being too late.
rtnight's cover story analyses, the distance remaining
hat the Akalis want and what the Centre is prepared to
s not unbridgeable. The greater danger is that delays and
will stretch that gap as moderates increasingly lose
f the movement. The moderate hand needs to be streng-
ere is no excuse to delay agreements already reached. Sikh
has been affronted well beyond the Akali flock; the man in
eeds to be persuaded that his religious and cultural senti-
respected.

ir part, the leaders of the Sikh agitation seem to have
n the heat of their religious and communal passion that
ap the harvest they sow. In all circumstances, the Sikhs
exist in peace and goodwill with other communities, and
s to live in harmony with the rest of India, and violent agi-
not promote amity. This supreme truth has to be driven
sensible and moderate leaders of the Akali Dal, and to the
ants who have turned the Punjab countryside into a
f India.

ask the partisan leadership of the Congress(I) has failed to
. Had Mrs Gandhi announced acceptance of the Akalis'
emands in Punjab, she would have won greater goodwill
ptance. Instead, her audience last month was a gathering
ho oppose the Akalis. Mrs Gandhi must play the role of
peace-maker; she must assume personal leadership of an
cess of negotiations with the Akalis. The opposition par-
ady to help and so are the chief ministers of the states not
er party. She cannot afford to reject help coming from any
or she must mobilise national support to neutralise and
emism, whether it raises its ugly head in Punjab or Assam.
olitics of Punjab, says chronicler Prakash Tandon, reflect
"our vital chaos". All these years, the vital chaos of Punjab has proved to be creative not only for the state but the whole country. It is a creativity that is symbolised by the golden wheat now swaying in its prosperous fields. The vital chaos of Punjab must not be allowed to turn into destructive carnage.

VVIPs

The New Caste

WHATEVER may be the graces of Indian life, good manners, politeness and a sense of dignity are hardly among them. The power élite has lost the elegance of feudal culture. It has not acquired the secular manners of a modern democracy. What Matthew Arnold said of 19th century England aptly describes the current Indian social milieu: inequality has materialised the upper class, vulgarised the middle class and brutalised the lower class. Rare is the Indian who does not want to flaunt his power, status or wealth, who does not act and behave as a petty feudal lord holding his own court. However 'modern' he may be, rare is the Indian who does not keep humble visitors waiting for hours, who believes in returning telephone calls or answering letters from men who do not matter. Rarer is the Indian of power or status who does not expect his subordinates to behave like subalterns, who realises that the concessions wrested from the weak are out of fear, not out of respect.

It is a strange disease that has befallen us as a people, and it is getting worse. Thirty years ago, who could think of a Cabinet minister accompanying a general secretary of the ruling party on his tour of the states or a chief minister paying homage to the 'Nehru Family' for all they had allegedly done for this state? Today Rajiv Gandhi, MP, does not visit a state capital except in the company of a Cabinet minister, and wherever he goes in the sprawling Congress(I) empire, he and his innumerable lesser counterparts all over the land think nothing of harvesting the undeserved genuflections of gnomes of the underworld of politics. Nobody stops to think of the absurdity of India as the only country in the world where it is not enough to be a VIP, and where officialdom has obligingly invented the exalted new label of VVIP—a Very Very Important Person.

Democratic India can learn a lot from democratic America. The Americans have a tradition of egalitarian courtesy, in part because theirs is a consumer-oriented society and good manners makes for good business. It is said that Americans were 'civilised' by Ma Bell, that they learnt manners from the girls who operated the Bell Telephone system. Unfortunately, Indians can hardly turn to the operators of Indian Telephones for lessons in politeness and courtesy. Instead, they turn to politicians whose arrogance grows as their power increases. No wonder then, that the graces are disappearing from Indian life, leaving behind a vacuous life-style of "affectation of affectation".

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▶ He (Mohammed Yunus) should know that I helped Mrs Gandhi financia during her crisis period. I have proof of this.

—Akbar Ahmed in Pr

▶ I will be ruthless. I have to show them (the agitators) I mean business. I will n allow anyone to kill women and children—even Hitler spared them.

—Hiteswar Saikia to a correspondent in Ass

▶ I cannot agree with those who say that Indira Gandhi is the main enemy today. The Left is worried that it may lose itself if it allies with her, but why don't they inste try to capture her? She is quite amenable to being influenced by the Left.

—Shripad Dange in Debon

▶ Whenever an organisation becomes weaker, its leader becomes stronger and s the case with Mrs Indira Gandhi.

—Maneka Gandhi in Curr

▶ It (the judiciary) must strengthen the Government. The relationship between two is that of husband and wife.

—N.T.Rama Rao to pressm

▶ What the Ayatollah (Khomeini) has succeeded in doing to the Iranian Muslin Jarnail Singh (Bhindranwale) has succeeded in doing to the Sikhs.... Both fanatical propagators of their respective faiths.

—Khushwant Singh in The Hindustan Tim

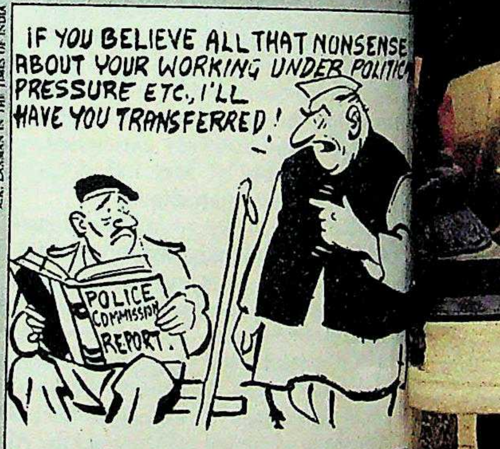
▶ His (General Zia-ul-Haq's) apparent concern for the fate of Indian Muslims is in reality hollow and deceitful... (it) is part of the trick he is playing upon his own people.

—Editorial comment in Patriot

▶ If politicians have a jekyll-and-Hyde existence, the press barons are no angels. Skeletons in their cupboards are far too many.

—Nikhil Chakravartty at a media function in New Delhi

R.K. LAXMAN IN THE TIMES OF INDIA


IF YOU BELIEVE ALL THAT NONSENSE ABOUT YOUR WORKING UNDER POLITIC PRESSURE ETC., I'LL HAVE YOU TRANSFERRED!
POLICE COMMISSION REPORT

▶ If your Mrs Gandhi and our President Zia played cricket, relations (between India and Pakistan) would improve faster.

—Imran Khan in The Sunday Obser

▶ Progressively there are fewer and fewer circles in India where you can have conv sations in which sentences are allowed to be completed.... The exhortation 'come *yaar*' is the dynamic principle guiding the culture of the new Indian elite.

—Gautam Adhikari in The Times of In

▶ Because I was misunderstood, there has been so much controversy (over the Bih Press Bill). All I wanted was a national debate on yellow journalism... I have been v much successful in my aim of creating a national debate.

—Jagannath Mishra in The Express Magaz

▶ It's my basic nature to flirt. I enjoy male company. I feel suffocated with wom who can only talk about solitaires and fashion.

—Moushumi Chatterjee in Cine Bl

▶ There are two types of actors—inspiring and perspiring... people like De Anand, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor are real actors. They make you perspire... I a what I call an inspiring actor.

—Shatrughan Sinha in Filmfa

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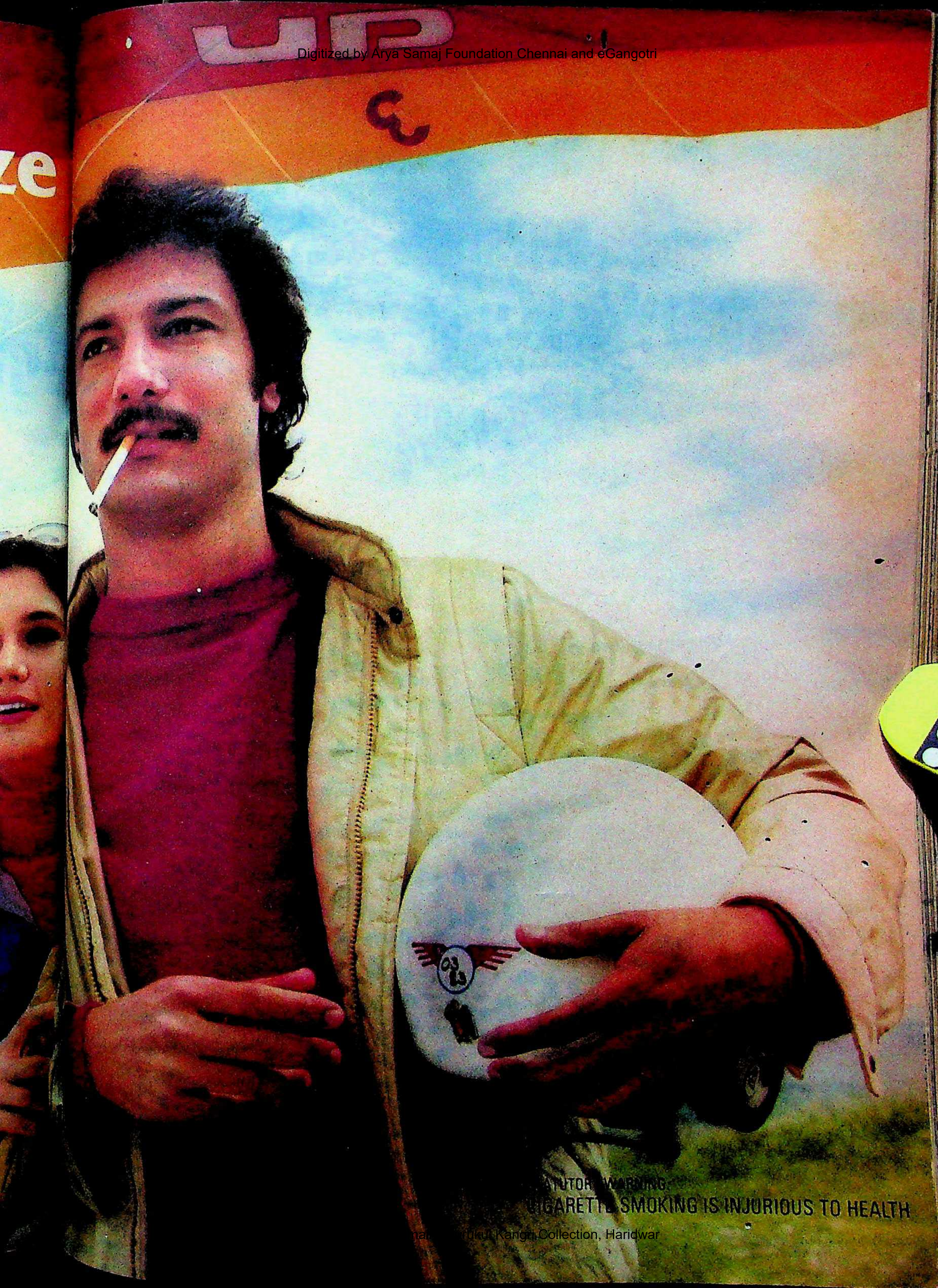

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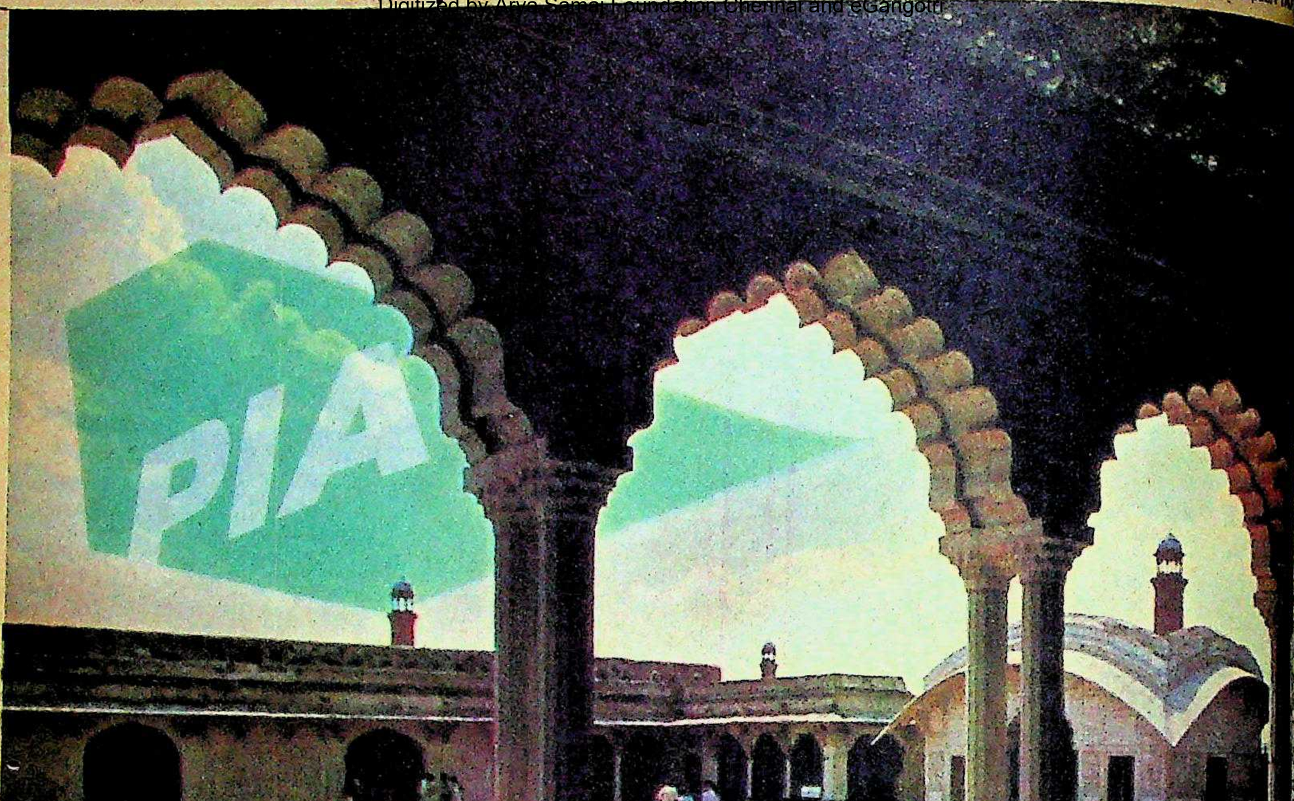

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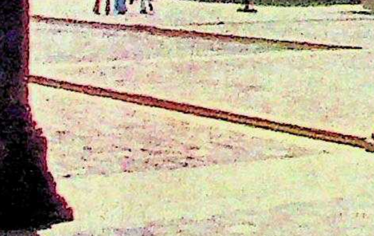

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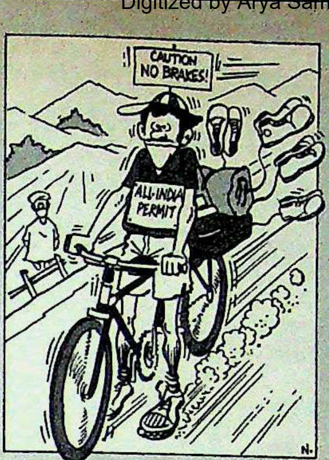
ING AWAY

ing charge of a vehi- India—four-wheeled, eled, or three-wheel- guiding it through of obstacles strategi- ed all over the road, for the faint-hearted. en the vehicle in comes without those things called brakes, person of inflexible will are the Indian roads. ere is, in this vast land, such a man. D.K. Devanand, a 16-year-old from Kumblur in Shimoga, Karnataka, took off on a bicycle on a cross-country tour last year and returned home a few months later. His bicycle had no brakes. Devanand, who must be one of the most nerveless men in India, covered 15,000 km without those modest little levers under the handles. And he did not move at a crawl, managing to do about 175 km a day, dodging speeding trucks, phlegmatic cattle and somehow slipping his way across crossroads.



Devanand did make very good use of his feet, however. Every time a lunatic in a truck hove to on the horizon, down would go Devanand's feet, his shoe soles would grip the road and in a swirl of smoke from burnt crepe, the bicycle would screech, literally, to a halt. No wonder, then, that the young daredevil wore out 10 pairs of shoes on his journey.

AKEN IDENTITY

conversation in a transport bus in y:

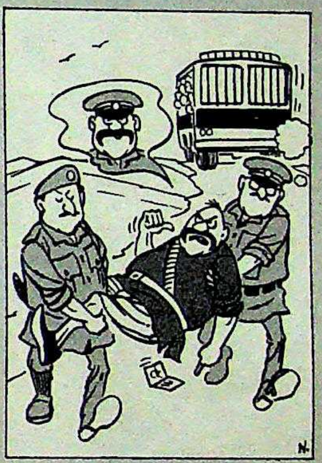
assenger: "I am from ice, and I have a pass allows me to travel

onductor: "Can I see ss?"

ssenger: "You have no ity to check."

onsternation. Conduc- ps bus and asks passen- get down. Passenger stays put. Conductor asks him again, less politely. Other passengers join in, tell passenger that he's holding them up, and he'll (unprintable) well show conductor his pass. Passenger bows to will of people, and flourishes a bedraggled trophy which turns out to be an identity card. Conductor tries to take it from passenger. Conversation:

Passenger: "*Haath mat lagana. Mera naam Gabbar Singh hai, Koi paas aaya to mein bhoon ke rakh doonga.*"



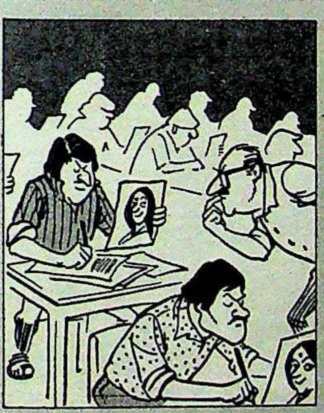
(Translation: I don't think you should touch me. I am an accomplished dacoit and if you come near me you might find yourself in trouble.)

Conductor now at end of tether. Other passengers, also wondering how they are going to explain to supervisor, manager, foreman, client, their coming to office an hour late. General shout: "Police Station!" Cops declare identity card to be bogus, accomplished dacoit is left brooding and bus pulls away.

Y GIRL

e examination season and with it the copying . Reports keep coming students carrying ency- dias of information on person. Last fortnight, in rpur, Punjab, Dream Hema Malini figured in isode.

one examination hall, dents were going about b of fooling the examiner with great application. The superintendent on his rounds was quite satisfied with the way things were going when he noticed that many candidates were periodically peeping at pictures of Hema, which they would take out of their pockets. He went up to one boy and asked him what was going on: the boy reportedly answered that he looked to Hema for inspiration. He was allowed to put the picture back in his pocket.

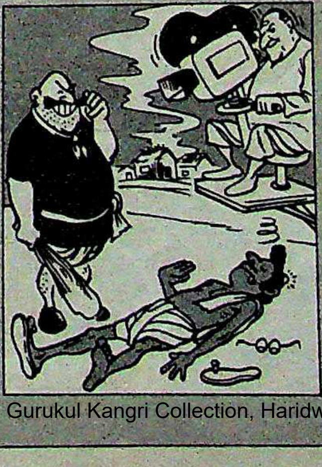


But the superintendent kept getting tantalising glimpses of Hema's delicious smile and finally the whole thing intrigued him so much that he searched all the boys and took their pictures away from them. He turned one over—only to find that it had a number of answers on its back. The person who said that films are a bad influence on children had a point.

EENPLAY

ese days, scratch a Indian politician and outh Indian actor. Or he other way round? Nandamuri Taraka Rao's, sorry, Lord 's, stunning victory in Pradesh, the film as taken on roles of a t kind. But at least one disciples is heading in her direction. He is Sunkara Satyanarayana, a member of the Legislative Council, who last fortnight announced his decision to act in a film by a renowned film director, U. Visweswararao.

The film will be called *Gudemlo Yemi Jarigindi*, or 'What Happened in the Hamlet', and is based on the story of Padirikuppam village where anti-Harijan violence took place during the elections. Satyanarayana will play a middle class farmer who preaches the Gandhian principle of non-violence, for which he is killed. This is a very laudable attempt on the part of the Telugu Desam to project its policies, and perhaps is exactly what Rama Rao had in mind when he said at Padirikuppam that the Government would soon be taking steps to improve the lot of the weaker sections.



—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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PUNJAB

Rising Extremism

THE CHANGE in political attitudes has come suddenly, and its consequence has been extremist and bloody. Less than two months after the last round of negotiations between the Akali Dal leaders and the Congress(I) broke down in New Delhi, Punjab is ablaze again. Violence on an unprecedented scale has gripped the state. Acts of terrorism, bomb blasts, murders and looting have become a daily routine. Over 20 agitators were killed in a single day during the successful 'rasta roko' campaign last fortnight. Ten days later a Home Guards armoury was looted in Ferozepur by terrorists. Rampant bomb explosions in Punjab's towns—some 85 blasts have been recorded since September 1981—have followed a pattern: the attempt has been to terrorise sections of the population, but not kill. In contrast to the recent spurt in deaths, only 18 people died from blasts and in shoot-outs with the police since late 1981.

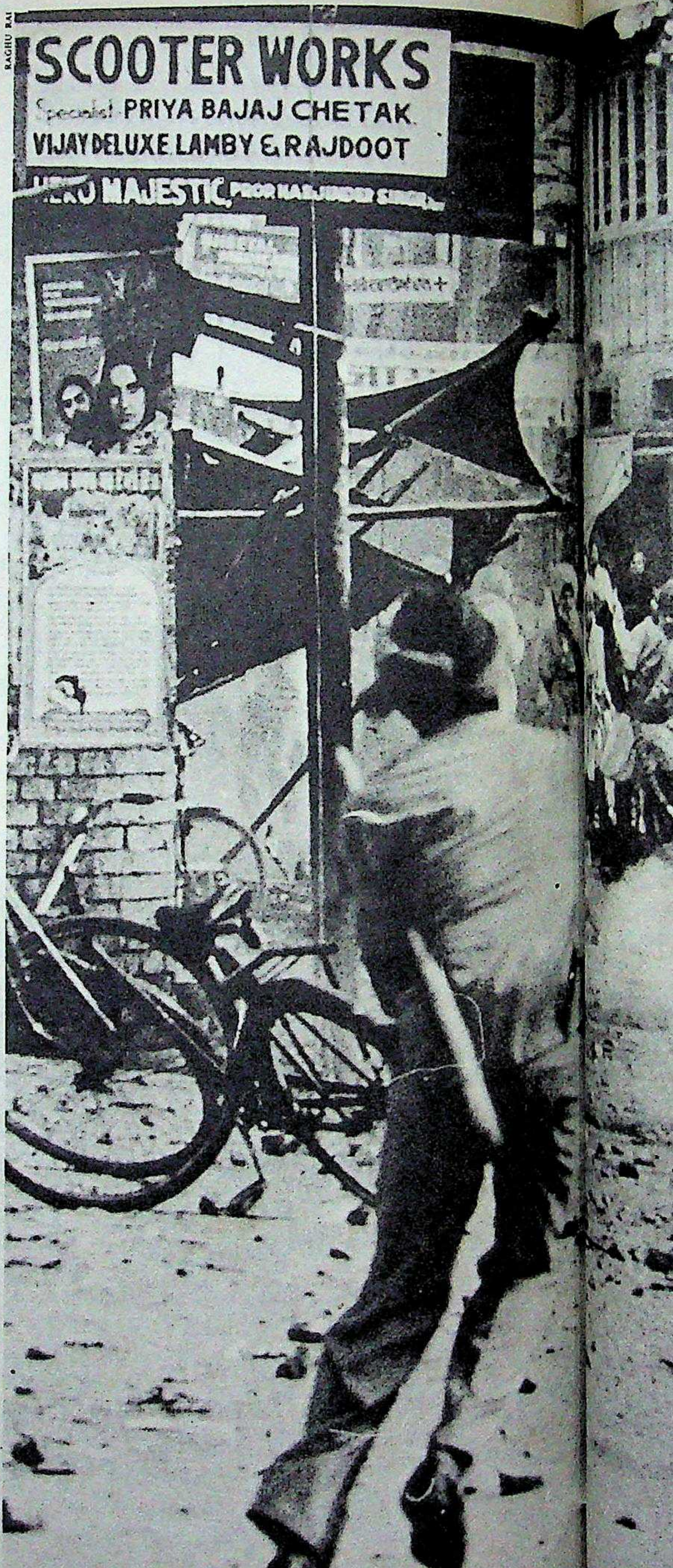
The increased militancy of the protest in the last two weeks could prove to be, Akali leaders point out, only the beginning of a long and bitter battle. Already the Akali Dal is gearing itself for yet more serious confrontations in months to come.

Extreme Step: Late last week Akali leader and morcha dictator Sant Harchand Singh Longowal announced in Amritsar the formation of a volunteer corps of a lakh of Sikhs to be known as *Sirjiware*—a do-or-die suicide squad—that would be amassed from Punjab's 12,500 villages to carry on the protest. "I want to tell Mrs Gandhi," said the otherwise moderate Longowal in an ultimatum, "that our patience is getting exhausted. She should stop playing with fire. This is not Assam. We will die like soldiers at the hands of the police ...we will tolerate no further ruse till she stops playing Holi with our blood." Less than two years ago, it was the same Longowal who, smilingly emerging from Mrs Gandhi's office after the first round of talks, had said: "The whole Nehru family has always been kind to the Sikh cause and this time also Mrs Gandhi will do full justice to us."

The hardening of attitudes has percolated downwards with alarming speed. The violence that has engulfed the state over the last several months has a pattern to it: few people are actually dying in the Akali sponsored agitation, but the bomb attacks and morchas serve very effectively to create insecurity among the state's non-Sikh population. And as communal passions between Sikhs and Hindus escalate, Punjab, India's prosperous and progressive frontier state, regresses into a state of disruption and chaos.

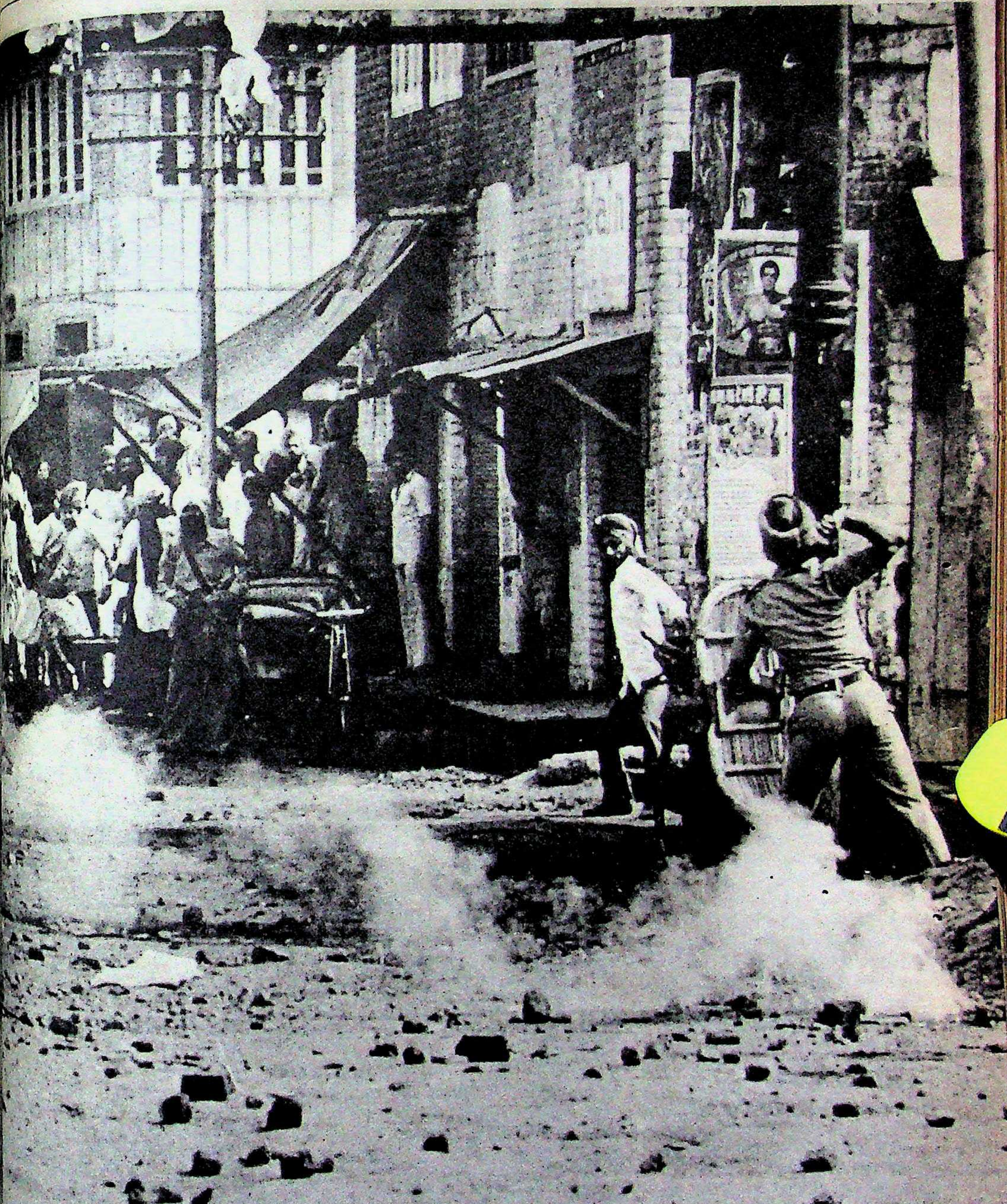
Last winter, when the state's jails were emptied of over 25,000 agitators who for four months starting August 4, 1982 had courted arrest every day (the two-year-long morcha, say the Akalis, has seen over a lakh of Sikhs arrested and at least 150 dead in incidents) there seemed a reasonable hope of settlement between the Akali leadership and the Centre. Moderates among the Akali leaders could, it appeared, hold back the extremists and evolve a compromise with the Centre which, it also seemed, was eager to respond.

Stalled Negotiations: All that is a thing of the past. With justification Mrs Gandhi had declined to talk with a gun held to the Centre's head. There is, clearly, no room for acquiescence under threat of


SCOOTER WORKS
Specialist PRIYA BAJAJ CHETAK
VIJAY DELUXE LAMBY & RAJDOOT
HERO MAJESTIC, PROP HARJINDER SINGH

RAGHU RAI

Police clash with demonstrators during the 'rasta roko' agitation



"I want to tell Mrs Gandhi that our patience is getting exhausted. She should stop playing with fire in Punjab. It is not Assam. Let her test. If we can die at the hands of the police chanting *sat nam wahe guru*, we can die like the soldiers we are. Once the cup of patience is full, it will be difficult for me to hold the people."

—HARCHAND SINGH LONGOWAL
Akali Dal Chief and Morcha Dictator

"Let Mrs Gandhi appoint a commiss
five or seven independent persons.
shall bow before their verdict. We ar
asking her to appoint Sikhs or Punj
to decide the justification or otherw
our demands. Let them be Hindus
Muslims or Christians. We do not th
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Gandhi does, to divide the people.

—PRAKASH SINGH BADAL,
Opposition Leader

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violence. But Mrs Gandhi and her advisers have either taken this argument too far or have failed to comprehend the gravity of the situation. At times their efforts at negotiation have appeared hopelessly amateurish, putting off decisions precisely when the talks were coming to a head.

Political compulsions dictated by the Haryana elections in June 1982 aborted talks that were moving smoothly towards conclusion. Mrs Gandhi's lieutenants advised against giving in to demands that might alienate the Haryana voter. Once again, in November 1982, just before the Asian Games, informal negotiations were about to yield tangible results when communication channels were switched off. And two months ago the tripartite meetings were called off when areas of disagreement had been narrowed down to two basic points, the status of Chandigarh and the sharing of Punjab rivers.

Symptomatic of a less-than-purposeful negotiating style was the undisciplined nature of the talks. More than one dozen mediators from Sardar Swaran Singh to Farooq Abdullah tried their hand at bridging the differences between the two sides. The status of the negotiations varied from private initiatives by Congress(I) MP's to high level talks by Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi and various chief ministers to broadbased conferences involving opposition leaders, making it virtually impossible to evolve a single thread of a negotiating line.

Insensitive Treatment: Sikh sentiments were further offended by the insensitive handling of Sikhs visiting New Delhi during the Asian Games; the harassment caused seemed to put off even the most cool-headed and educated among them. Instead of strengthening the hands of the moderates among the Akali leaders to keep the extremists in check, the ruling party gave the impression of playing politics by exploiting differences of approach among the Akali factions. "Weakening the moderates would only help the extremist fringe," pointed out former ambassador to Moscow I.K. Gujral in a recent article. And Prem Bhatia, editor of the prestigious Chandigrah daily *The Tribune* warned in a front-page editorial last week: "The scope for any talks will become even more limited if initiative in the matter is further delayed... what is needed now is political wisdom and courage. Punjab is faced with a greater danger to communal peace than ever before in the past 36 years."

As the Akali moderates have been pushed to pursue the hard line of extremist demands, the extremists themselves are on the ascendant. It is no longer milder Akali leaders like former chief minister Prakash

RAGHU RAI

Police tackle a demonstrator: inflamed passions

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BADAL,
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kali Morcha Dictator Harchand ngowal permits me, I shall take rs to take revenge on the Punjab which has killed 30 innocent April 4, and teach Punjab Chief arbara Singh, who is behaving cious Mir Manu, for a petty seat inistership, a correct lesson."
RNAIL SINGH BHINDRANWALE
religious leader

"The Central Government wants to test our strength. Let it. Sikhs must understand that Mrs Gandhi's Government is not bothered about the killings and wants an Assam-like situation in Punjab. Mrs Gandhi's only worry is her *gaddi* and she can play with fire for that. Human lives are immaterial to her. Her game is power and we understand it very well."
—GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA
President, SGPC

Singh Badal and Dal President Longowal who can alone clinch a bargain; the solution has to be reached with the consent of the extremist minority, such as the volatile zealot Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his main supporter, Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) leader Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Says Tohra: "This government of Darbara Singh asks us to break our relations with the extremists but may I ask Darbara Singh why did he arrange our marriage with them? The extremists are Congress(I) products and everyone knows that the Congress(I) Government is using them to malign us."

Ensconced in the protected precincts of the Guru Nanak Niwas, the four-storeyed guest-house adjoining the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and surrounded by his small army of heavily-armed followers, the tall, black-bearded Bhindranwale, his eyes glinting dangerously, has become the symbol of the protest. Officially neither a member of the Akali Dal nor a member of powerful SGPC which controls all religious seats of the Sikhs, the 37-year-old sant is no ordinary political leader. Events of the past two years have made this insignificant, uneducated small time zealot from village Chowk Mehta into the key figure behind the agitation, without whose assent no resolution to the crisis is possible, and without whose active participation there can be no peace in the offing.

Dangerous Fundamentalism: Beyond the reach of the law—he has been given refuge in a building that the Akalis consider part of the Golden Temple and thus out of bounds to the police—he is now also beyond the control of the Akali leaders themselves. Blatantly communal and rabidly racist, Bhindranwale's inflammatory utterances and bigoted outlook have become the underpinning of Sikh revivalism. His advent—widely promoted by the media which he has managed with the flair of a born publicist—has spawned dangerous fundamentalist feelings among Sikhs, so that it is no longer a small band of village rustics who speak of themselves as a separate ethnic community (*qaum*) but also a separate race (*nasal*).

But it is impossible to predict how long the revival will last, or how far-reaching popular support for Bhindranwale is. Clearly, the Akali leaders still have use for him, though privately the moderates fear his future potential. No Akali leader will come on record with their views on him, except extremists like Tohra who has backed him from the outset to retain his control on the organisation he has now headed for 13 years.

Prakash Singh Badal, a leader with a wide mass base and a capacity for organising elections, on the other hand, has been staunchly opposed to Bhindranwale. Being a firm moderate and the most secular in out-

In Public ngr on, Haridwar

look; he has been keenest for a compromise with the Centre. But even he will not profess his disapproval of Bhindranwale openly for fear of weakening the agitation's momentum, though he remains the only Akali leader who has never gone to consult him. Morcha dictator Longowal, it is said, often seeks Bhindranwale's advice on the future of the agitation.

Strong Appeal: Bhindranwale, more than any other Akali leader, has assumed the proportions of a messiah. To a great extent, it is his outspoken, belligerent views that constantly attract attention; equally, it is his smooth handling of the media for whom he has all the time in the world. But his overall appeal lies in his strident defence of his faith that seems to strike a chord of sympathy in any Sikh with a propensity to turn a leader into a hero, a hero into a saint.

Moreover, he has, in his rigid, puritanical way, come to stand for a Sikh revival at a time when the community's insecurities about its identity are at their lowest. Says Indarjit Singh, a former chairman of Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited, in a recent essay on Sikh revivalism in *Seminar*: "Time and again, the peripheral Sikhs have risen to the occasion under the influence of the core (of the religion) and demonstrated that martyrs can be made from ordinary clay."

If that is the case, then Bhindranwale represents the resurgent core of the Sikh religion. On the plainly social level, his arrival on the scene has engendered a new interest among younger Sikhs about their religion. An observer in Chandigarh points out that, whereas a few years ago it was fashionable for young urban Sikhs to trim their beards, today it is in vogue to keep them long and untrimmed. There also seems to be a noticeable rise in the number of younger Sikhs visiting gurudwaras and observing ritual.

Unusual Votaries: Bhindranwale's brand of extremism has found votaries in odd places, even among sections of the educated Sikh elite. Says Gurutej Singh Brar, a senior IAS officer charge-sheeted in Chandigarh last August for publicly arguing the Sikh-nation theory: "The Sikh-nation theory has been current among Sikhs since the time of Guru Nanak. There should be others like Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to lead the Sikhs and take up their cause of righteousness and truth."

In fact, men like Brar a few years ago would have been unlikely to air such sentiments openly. Today they can be heard arguing in any city in Punjab, claiming that "all Sikhs feel exactly like I do". The proliferation of such sentiments, according to rational-thinking Punjabis in the state, is the most frightening development of Bhindranwale's increased stature. Even academics

"The most dangerous thing that has happened in Punjab is the development of a total tribal confrontation. Rational thinking has been suspended and all responses are emotional. The tension between the two communities has been accentuated by the ruling party."
—DR ATTAR SINGH, chairman, school of Punjabi Studies, Chandigarh University

"Industry in Punjab is in shambl
There is no question of new investm
in Ludhiana; in fact, many of the b
industrialists are moving out an
investing in other states. If the
communal clashes continue, Punja
prosperity will simply fade away
—J.L. OSWAL, head of the Oswal group

CHRONOLOGY

Countdown To Chaos

April 1980

► The Akali Dal government led by Prakash Singh Badal is dismissed from office.

June 1980

► Congress(I) wins Assembly elections and forms government under Darbara Singh. Between August 1980 and September 1981, the Akalis lead seven major agitations in Punjab and 25,000 agitators court arrest. The Akalis submit a memorandum to the prime minister listing their 45 demands and grievances, which is ignored. In March, 1981, an educational conference called by the chief Khalsa Diwan in Chandigarh supports the separate Sikh nation theory. Ganga Singh Dhillon threatens to take the issue to the United Nations.

September 9, 1981

► Lala Jagat Narain, the editor of the *Hind Samachar* group of papers is murdered.

September 19, 1981

► Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is arrested from his Chowk Mehta *dera* on charges of conspiracy to murder Narain. Police firing in Chowk Mehta claims 17 lives. It is followed by shoot-outs in Punjab towns which result in five de

September 28, 1981

► Bhindranwale is released from under directions from the prime min

October 15, 1981

► Compelled by the angry moo Akalis, Mrs Gandhi meets a high- delegation in Delhi. Akali le Prakash Singh Badal, Harchand S Longowal, Gurcharan Singh T Balwant Singh and Surjit Singh Ba have a 'satisfying' round of talks express total 'confidence' in Gandhi's capacity to help the Sikhs Punjab.

December 31, 1981

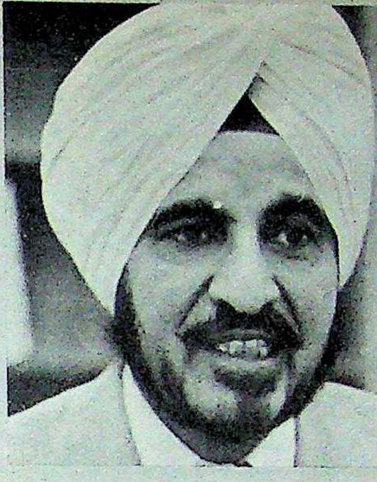
► Akalis discover that the prime mi ter is only buying time. While the n tiations are under way, Mrs Ga summons Congress(I) chief minister Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to cuss the crucial water issue. The p minister amends her order of 1976 decides to give a little more water f the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej to Punjab.

April 5, 1982

► After a total lull for the next months Badal, Tohra, Barnala, Bal Singh and Ravi Inder Singh meet

ir (Akalis') petty politics. Why ot solve these problems when in power? They are exploiting gion for their own ends."

—NACHCHATTER SINGH,
le level farmer from Patiala



"If the contending parties sit across the table with the honest intention of finding a solution to the tangled Punjab problem it can be found in no time."

—DR SARDAR SINGH JOHL,
vice-chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala

ister again. But Akali hopes are ed and they return to the

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Gandhi lays the foundation of Yamuna link canal at Kapoori Akalis begain their morcha.

1982

morcha shifts to Amritsar and a dharamyuddha with Akalis arrest each day.

11, 1982

s lead a demonstration outside . Four are killed.

11, 1983

t of mediators shuttle between andigarh and Amritsar. Nego- gin after former Union external nister Swaran Singh persuades resume talks. The Akali leader- ts a Union Cabinet sub- consisting of Energy Minister ankar, Defence Minister taraman and External Affairs P.V. Narasimha Rao in the vernor's house in Chandigarh.

18, 1983

is another round in h but no breakthrough results. ments: "What is the point of dlessly when the Union minis- power to decide? We shall not anyone. Let Mrs Gandhi know

February 8, 1983

► But a month later, following a stony silence from the Akalis, Mrs Gandhi formally invites the Akalis to tripartite talks in Delhi. The other party to the negotiations are opposition leaders. There are six rounds of talks on February 22, 1983. Mrs Gandhi also involves the chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan as well as state-level opposition leaders.

February 13, 1983

► Mrs Gandhi announces acceptance of three major religious demands of the Akalis. Gurbani is to be broadcast from All India Radio, the all-India gurudwara act is to be passed and the walled city of Amritsar is to receive 'holy city' status. The Akalis, however, term the concession a fraud.

March 26, 1983

► The prime minister announces appointment of Justice Sarkaria to review Centre-state relations. The Akalis welcome it, since their one major demand is to give more powers to the states; nevertheless, they increase the tempo of the agitation.

April 4, 1983

► The Akali 'rasta roko' agitation, a total success otherwise, claims 21 lives. A judicial probe is ordered into the police firing after all the major Opposition parties press for it.

and social scientists seem hard-pressed for convincing explanations. Says Dr Attar Singh, chairman of the School of Punjabi Studies in Chandigarh, formerly a close adviser of Giani Zail Singh: "The most dangerous development in Punjab today is the total tribal confrontation between the two communities. This has eroded rational thinking and promoted emotional responses." "As long as Bhindranwale continues to have his way, Punjab will continue to burn," says Virendra, editor of the popular Jullundur daily, *Pratap*.

Bhindranwale's phenomenal rise as the Sikh terror, ironically, is not of his own making. A series of events and political manipulations—both by the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal—have transformed him into the shrewdest survivor of all, so that he is today positioned to manipulate the leaderships of both parties.

AN INSIGNIFICANT village preacher before he was jailed in September 1981 for his alleged involvement in the murder of *Punjab Kesari* Editor Lala Jagat Narain, Bhindranwale has emerged as a law unto himself since his release two months later. Though he still denies any involvement in Narain's murder, or the earlier killing of Nirankari leader Baba Gurcharan Singh in New Delhi, he continues to applaud their killers. "Whoever performed these great feats," says he, "deserves to be honoured by the Akal Takht, the highest seat of the Sikhs.... if their killers came to me, I would weigh them in gold."

The sant isn't displaying gallows humour in such statements. His fanatical defence of the Sikh faith is based upon the conviction that any power that opposes it must logically be exterminated. This includes Hindus, the Congress(I) leadership, the distinct Sikh sect of Nirankaris, and Congress(I) Sikhs like President Zail Singh and Chief Minister Darbara Singh, for whom he reserves the sobriquet of "Indira's touts". Speaking of the last he begins to use especially crude Punjabi metaphors, making a spitting movement from his cot. "These Sikhs," he says in disgust, "fill their stomachs by licking the dust off Indira's chappals."

His antagonism is obviously recent, for exactly these leaders promoted his early career to further their own political interests. Zail Singh backed Bhindranwale's supporters against the Akalis in the last SGPC elections with no success. And Darbara Singh —by announcing his arrest warrant on the radio and then permitting him to choose his own time and place of arrest—was the first to bestow martyrdom upon him. Seventeen devout Sikhs were killed in the riot at Chowk Mehta when Bhindranwale was arrested; and when he emerged he undertook a triumphant tour of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Bombay.

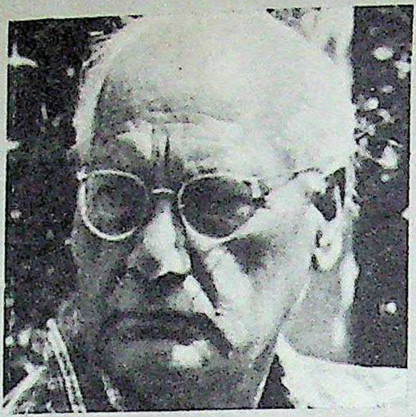
In Delhi, Bhindranwale met Zail Singh and Buta Singh at the 'bhog' (last rites) of murdered Akali leader Santokh Singh. And his release from jail—he was charged with conspiracy to murder—without bail or any personal bond, took place at the intervention of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself. Though he is still charged in the Jagat Narain murder case, last fortnight another case of criminal offence was slapped upon him, this time for inciting communal hatred.

Communal Viewpoint: Inciting communal conflict at every stage has become very much Bhindranwale's stock-in-trade. In fact, he sees all politics and politicians in communal terms. In his rustic Punjabi he explains that the Hindus and the Congress(I) have ganged up against the Sikhs and the Akali Dal. "Hindus smash the window panes of the Golden Temple in broad daylight and no one can touch them. Sikhs are gunned down when they are innocently walking in the street. It is Indira Gandhi—is she not a Hindu?—who has ganged up with other Hindus against our creed. During the Asian Games she barred Sikhs from entering Delhi. Did she stop any Hindus?"

The sant talks non-stop as he lies all day on his camp-bed, four floors up on the roof of the Guru Nanak Niwas, with a splendid view of the Golden Temple as the backdrop. A few dozen of the faithful, most of them armed with kirpans, spears, rifles and revolvers, are spread out on the floor beside him. A steady stream of visitors pours in to pay homage, bringing gifts and cash offerings.

Ever since his release from jail he has been given asylum by the Akalis in Guru Nanak Niwas where he lives with his miniscule force of youthful supporters, all heavily armed. Though he regularly visits the shrine of Harimandir Sahib—the inner sanctum of the Golden Temple—and is frequently invited to attend meetings of Akali leaders held in the SGPC headquarters next door, he is extremely guarded about stepping out publicly. In fact, his exact sleeping quarters inside Guru Nanak Niwas are not known, and it is suggested that he changes rooms often to keep his precise whereabouts unknown. His critics within the Akali Dal point out that, behind his big-mouthed bravura, he has the mentality of a bully with a cowardly heart. Certainly, he lives in mortal fear of his life—in his dangerous brand of politics, friends could easily turn enemies—and will step out under no pretext.

Recently, when an antagonistic Akali leader dispatched a group of women to request him to lead the daily morcha, Bhindranwale skilfully evaded the issue. There are those among the humblest of Sikhs who



"Mrs Gandhi should show some dynamism. Punjab is slipping into an explosive situation each day. Without adequate water in the canals, Punjab cannot survive. Its needs, since it has developed far ahead of others, cannot be ignored without peril."
—M.S. RANDHAWA, former vice-chancellor of the Punjab Agricultural University

"If the demands are not taken seriously, they will lead to frustra among the Sikhs, the frustration w lead to extremism and violence, and the violence to communalism.
—BALWANT SINGH, former Punjab finance minister

RIVER DISPUTE

Troubled Waters

WATER is a gut issue in Punjab. At every public meeting Akali leaders hammer home one point: "Your lands will go dry." For the rural peasantry who constitute more than 80 per cent of their supporters no prediction is more dreaded. Says Sant Singh Sekhon, a well-known writer: "A Punjabi farmer will kill for water. Religion provides the colour but the real issues that make the Akali issue click are economic."

If the Akalis could have their way Punjab would get the lion's share of the waters of the Sutlej, the Ravi and the Beas. They take the rigid stand that since Punjab is the sole riparian state, it alone has any right to the water of the three rivers. The only exception they make is to concede that Haryana has a right to share the water since it was once a part of Punjab. Says former Union agriculture minister Surjit Singh Barnala: "It was the strategic location of Punjab that made Pakistan agree to sign the Indus Water Treaty and concede these rivers to India. Hence Punjab's total right to these rivers."

Centre's Stand: The Centre, on the other hand, has always been determined to fend for the other northern states like Rajasthan and Haryana. It maintains that Rajasthan has to be ensured some water since there is nowhere it could get water from. It also holds that Haryana has to be given water since it has littl to fall back on—its canals are p developed and it receives very little

Ironically, it is Punjab's prosp that has fuelled its thirst; with mor more land coming under the plough, i tion needs have multiplied. When th guidelines for the use of the river w were issued in 1955 there were no vo rous protests about the agreement. A time Rajasthan was given 8 million feet (MAF) of water. The undivided P state got 7.2 MAF and Jammu & Kas got 0.65 MAF.

In successive agreements since the Centre has more or less stuck to formula while tilting slightly tow Punjab. The fruits of the 1960 I Water Treaty with Pakistan, under w India got unrestricted rights to us water of the three rivers, were also div between Punjab, Rajasthan and Har with 0.2 MAF being kept for D drinking water supply. Another ment in 1976 was more or less f upon the states during the Emerg after they failed to agree on the divis the water, giving Punjab 3.5 MAF.

Continued Disagreement: The A protested at this agreement and the Janata governments rule they their case to the Supreme Court. In of this, Akali chief minister Prakash

"Mrs Gandhi should accept emands since these are genuine. unjab has more powers, it shall ot run away to Pakistan. Our country is India."
—RAJINDER SINGH, farmer

"I came to Punjab from Assam to have peace. But where is peace! Punjab is like Assam. The Government is messing up here too. It should not allow matters to go out of hand and solve Punjab's problems quickly."
—AVTAR SINGH,
a dhabawala on the Sangrur Ludhiana-highway

see their leaders for what they are. Said Bhag Singh, a cobbler at village Kup Kalan Chowk near Malerkotla: "These politicians are destroying our peace for their petty gains. Why should innocent people die of police bullets? Why was no big leader seen leading the'rasta roko'agitation on April 4?"

Crucial Issues: Though the Akali demands vary from leader to leader, the two immediate issues that the Akalis would like to see settled with the Centre in the present phase of their agitation concern the sharing of Punjab's river waters (*see box*) and the granting of Chandigarh city as their capital. Although, back in 1970 Mrs Gandhi made the award of the city to Punjab she added the condition that in return Punjab would have to give over two of its north-western tehsils, Fazilka and Abohar, to Haryana.

This the Akalis find unacceptable. They would like to keep Chandigarh and have the fate of the two tehsils decided by an independent tribunal set up by the Centre, as in the case of river water dispute. Virtually all leaders have stopped talking for the moment about a total acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib resolution (INDIA TODAY, November 15, 1982) which calls for complete autonomy of the state, Akali control of all gurudwaras in the country and the return to Punjab of territories that are now part of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan.

"These," claims Bhindranwale, "are not merely our demands but our rights." He is the only leader still pressing for a total acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib resolution, though first he would like the Indian Constitution to be amended to specify that Sikhs are a separate ethnic community. In other words, he would like Sikhs to enjoy special minority status. The point is also emphasised by Tohra who would like to see a separate personal law for Sikhs, "just as there are separate personal laws for Muslims and Christians." Other demands include:

► Declaration of Amritsar as a "holy city"; though the Government has already banned the sale of cigarettes and liquor within an area of 200 m around the Golden Temple, the Akalis would like to see the whole city freed from shops selling either commodity.

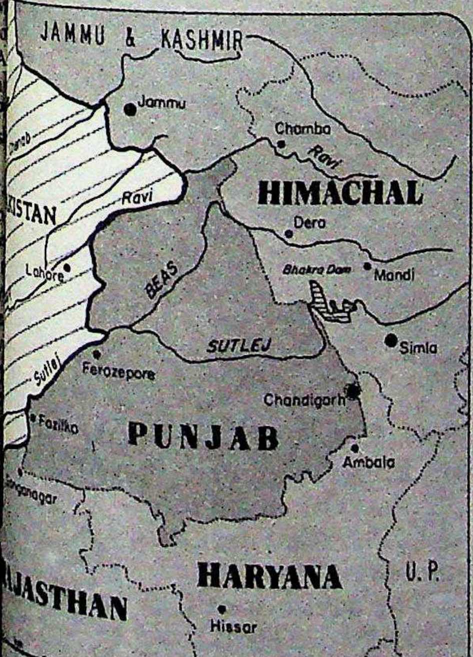
► Relay of Gurbani (text of the religious book) from the Golden Temple for three hours daily instead of the 90 minutes agreed to by the Government.

► Release of over 20 supporters of Bhindranwale.

► The renaming of the Flying Mail from Bombay to Amritsar as the Golden Temple Express, which has also been denied.

Unfortunate Delays: Still, it is generally agreed that had it not been for the four-month-long delay by the Centre over the two

agreed to continue work on the versial Sutlej-Yamuna Link It was only after Mrs Gandhi re- to power that a new agreement ned in 1981 increasing Punjab's to 4.22 MAF. A government white later claimed that the state was get- per cent more than it did from the agreement. The Government clai- that this was a "fair and equitable" ution.



Map by B.K. Sharma

Such claims cut little ice with the Akalis. Badal points out that only 14.20 lakh hectares of land in Punjab is irrigated by canals. This leaves more than 20 lakh hectares dependent on power or diesel-run tubewells. Says Badal: "The tubewell irrigation is three to nine times more costly and the alarming rate of recession of subsoil water is making it uneconomical."

To back Punjab's claims Badal quotes the Narmada Water Tribunal award of 1974 which denied Rajasthan any Narmada water since it was not a riparian state. Other Sikh organisations like the Council of Sikh Affairs, which has several eminent Sikhs for members, have dug out precedents from international law to prove that Punjab has been unjustly denied control over its water.

The Government claims that the Akalis are exaggerating their grievances. For a start it points out that Rajasthan is only using a fraction of the water allotted to it. For the time being at least Punjab is free to use the excess. But this is not a stand that is likely to please the Akalis.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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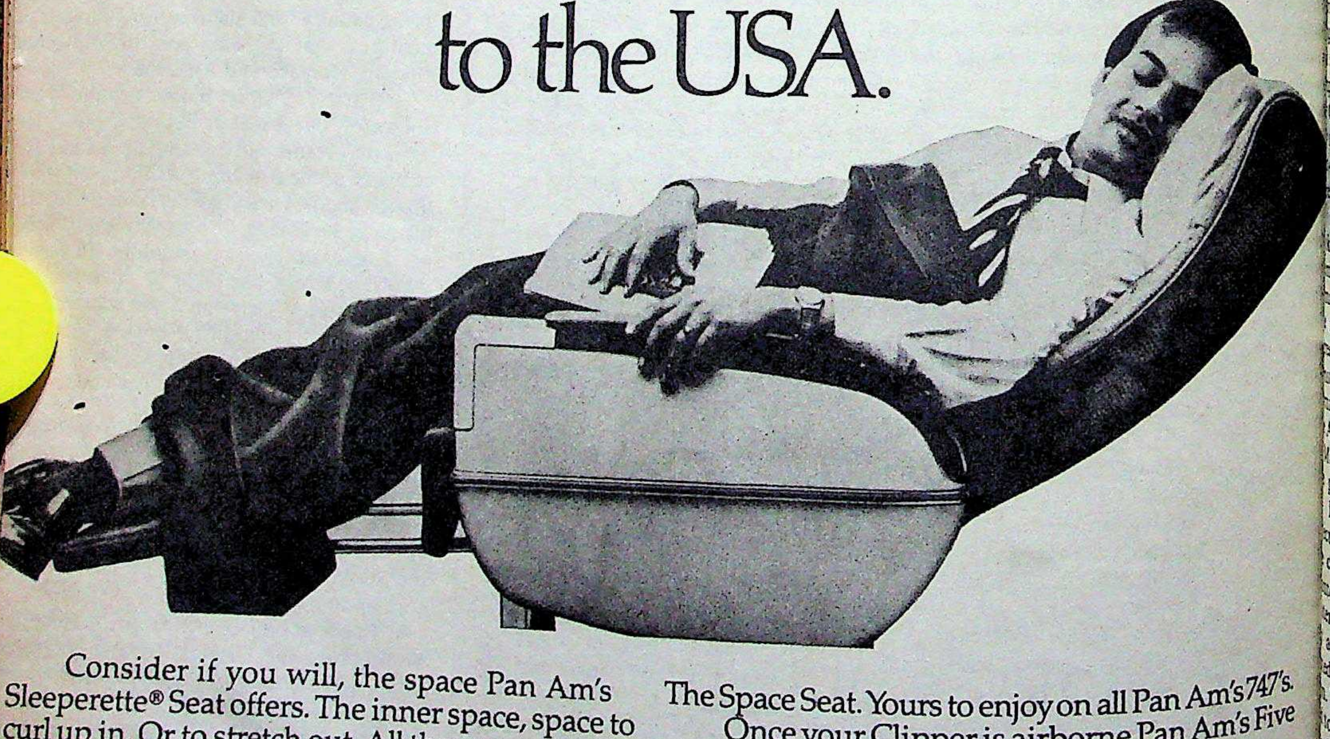

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Akali grievances of water and Chandi- the agitation may not have taken such y turn. Neither of the two negotiating s, to start with, had the mandate to a settlement, so that each time they had urn to their leaders; Home Minister to the prime minister and the Akalis ngowal.

Both opposition leaders and chief mi- s who later participated in the tripartite maintained that this was the major of delay; Mrs Gandhi's active partici- n in resolving the issues at an earlier with the major Akali leaders would softened them in the beginning. Says n Singh Shekhawat, a Bharatiya Janata (BJP) leader who was invited by Rajas- Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur to the meeting: "Throughout the tripartite s we found it ludicrous that the home ter would rush off again and again e prime minister's Principal Secretary Alexander to consult on each point."

Clearly, Mrs Gandhi's handing over the r first to Foreign Minister P.V. Nara- a Rao, then former foreign minister an Singh, then to unofficial mediators Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister oq Abdullah, Congress(I) MP Amrinder h and Communist Party of India-Mar- MP Harkishen Singh Surjeet, was an at- to pass the buck and buy time. Says General Secretary L.K. Advani: "I must hat if the Akalis were adamant about in issues, the Government was yet more asonable on other issues."

The talks on both the crucial issues e down because the Government ed unprepared to concede the Akali and for independent tribunals to settle matter. In fact, the Akalis had also ed that they would not obstruct the truction of a canal by the Haryana Go- ment for carrying water—an issue that Akalis had used to launch their morcha ay 1982 when Mrs Gandhi inaugurated project before the Haryana elections.

Differing Stands: Other incidents also cted the progress of the negotiations. In case of the water dispute, the Akalis ted the tribunal to decide the sharing of r with Haryana on the basis of the sta- actual utilisation, whereas Haryana in- d that it should be on the basis of alloca- n. The Haryana Government also objec- to the appointment of a tribunal to settle Chandigarh issue.

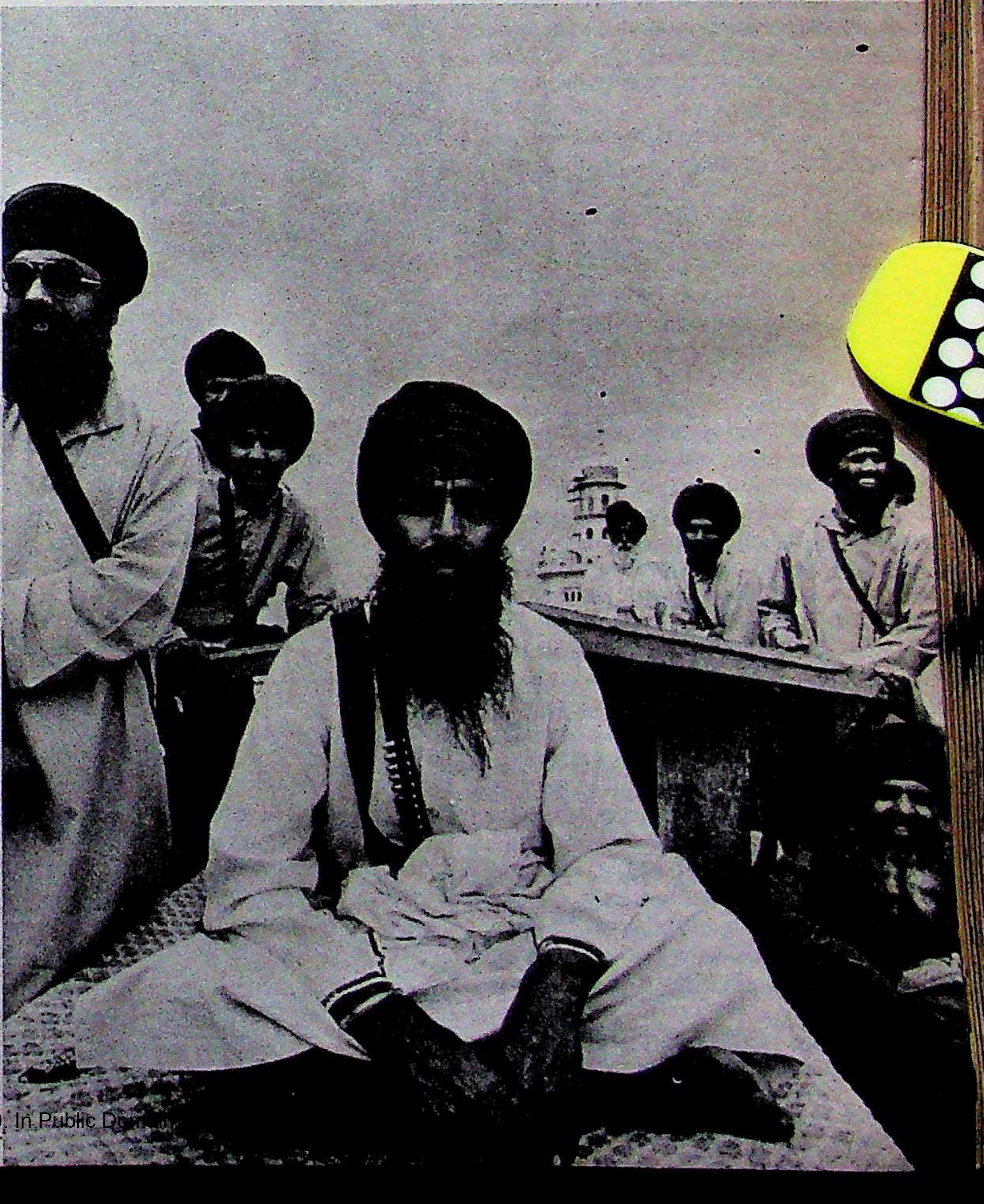
The opposition believes that the issues be resolved at Mrs Gandhi's initiative. Congress(S) MP K.P. Unnikrishnan: only way out of the Punjab crisis is to re- to the table and work out solutions. It may e to be a small price to pay than plunge

"These politicians are destroying our peace for their petty gains. Why should innocent people die? Why was no big leader killed in the April 4 firing?"

—MILKHA SINGH, farmer

"I was beaten up and my shop damaged for no fault of mine, I sat here working when the police attacked. Where should I go? This is my home, my work-place."

—BHAG SINGH, cobbler



RAGHU RAI

ranwale with supporters: symbol of protest

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into a national crisis. The negotiations with the Akalis failed because of the ruling party's efforts in politicising the issue for their electoral gains in the future. Helping escalate any such crisis seems to be Mrs Gandhi's policy."

Though Sethi renewed the Government's invitation for another round of talks, the Akalis declined arguing that it would be of no avail. The Opposition supported the Akali opinion in view of the Union home minister's inability to make any commitment without consulting the prime minister. Despite the deadlock, the Central Government last fortnight was trying to find a lasting solution. Some of the alternatives being considered were:

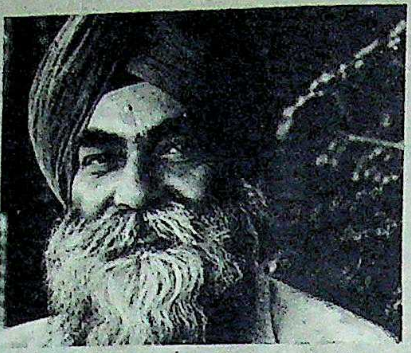
► Unilateral announcement regarding appointment of judicial commissions to look into both territorial and water disputes;

► Immediate transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and referring the question of Abohar and Fazilka to the Supreme Court and adequate ex-gratia grant to Haryana for constructing a new capital;

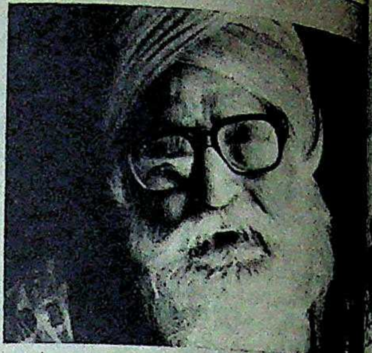
► Appointment of an all-party panel to look into the remaining Akali demands like recruitment policy, withdrawal of cases against Akali agitators and enactment of an all India gurudwara act.

The Akalis can, however, only be brought back to negotiate again if Mrs Gandhi and the ruling party refrain from politicising the issue. The Akalis and the Opposition base their argument on the facts of the matter: that the Congress(I) can only retain its political power in Punjab by keeping the Hindus and Sikhs divided. Even in the June 1980 assembly elections, the Congress(I) could only win 67 of the 117 seats, and there is little doubt that the animus between the Sikh and Hindu communities has benefited the Congress(I) by consolidating the Hindu vote in its favour.

On the other hand, since the Akalis cannot fight the ruling party alone, it is in the Congress(I)'s interest to drive a wedge between the Hindu-dominated BJP and the Akali Dal. The Akalis have governed Punjab only with the help of the BJP or, before that, the Jan Sangh. Now, both the Akalis and the BJP see the wisdom of getting closer together to thwart what they see as the Congress(I)'s political designs. The Akalis are, consequently, open in their appeal to the BJP and, indeed, other opposition parties while the BJP, which had been sharply critical of the Akali agitation, has softened its attitude. Vajpayee was openly critical of the Congress(I)'s handling of the situation when he led opposition leaders for an on the spot study of police firings on the Akalis.



"The Sikhs have nothing against the Hindus, it is the Hindus who have betrayed Punjab. If things carry on like this there will be widespread violence and ultimately a separation of Punjab."
—SUKHJINDER SINGH,
Akali leader and former education minister



"Bomb blasts are the doings of goonda gangs—there are Sikh goondas and Hi goondas. Both communities have lived absolute peace. We're one as a busines community also. It's the rulers who do want us to survive in peace."
—BHAGWAN SINGH CHAWLA, president
Amritsar Beopar Mandal

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RAGHU RAI

A determined phalanx of 'rasta roko' volunteers: successful protest

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ndus hate Bhindranwale but t can they do? The leaders are people like him protection. And uble with the police is that it is heltering the Sikhs. If there are a ple more incidents, Sikhs and ndus will completely divide."

—GURUPRASAD,
y fruit merchant, Dal Mandi, Amritsar

"A lot of patience is needed to deal with the Akalis who know how to fight long battles. People should be assured complete safety and efforts made to solve Punjab's problems."

—MRS NEERA BALA SUNDRAM,
headmistress of Henderson Memorial Girls High School, Kharar, Ropar

The Congress(I)'s performance has also failed to mobilise its supporters to match the Akali assault on the political plane. Barring half a dozen well-attended meetings organised by Indian Youth Congress(I) General Secretary Vinod Sharma there was no attempt by the Congress(I) ministers to carry out a counter-campaign. Even though intelligence reports had warned the Government that 'rasta roko' was likely to be a massive success, the Congress(I) failed to organise mass support. Union minister Buta Singh who had promised to address public meetings failed to come and Congress(I) MLA's stayed in Chandigarh under police guard.

Such political backstage manoeuvring is hardly surprising. And it is entirely likely that even if the demands are met, the Punjab problem may not be solved. As Bhindranwale indicates, there may be additional demands up the extremists' sleeves. Or new political issues may rear their heads.

With the situation intensifying daily, the Union Government was in a conciliatory mood but not prepared to convey the impression that it was yielding to extremist pressure and setting a precedent for other extremist groups. The Government maintained that it had already made major concessions to the Akalis by accepting their religious demands and constituting the R.S. Sarkaria Commission to look into Centre-state relations. It was also willing to consider the Akalis' territorial and water demands provided they withdrew their agitation and condemned the violence.

Initiative Needed: Mrs Gandhi also wanted Akali MP's and MLA's to withdraw their resignation letters, submitted to cause political instability. Said a Union minister in New Delhi: "Akalis are playing up the sentiments of the Sikh public. Even the moderate faction of the Akali leadership is afraid of disowning the extremists. So from the non-Akali point of view all Akalis are to be seen as one entity; any endorsement of even their most reasonable demand will be regarded by non-Akalis in Punjab and elsewhere as an endorsement of extremist activity."

But the Centre can no longer afford to dither. Time is of the essence; and the ruling party cannot afford to lose its last chance to act before the rising tide of violence tears Punjab with communal fury. The Akalis on their part must halt the slide to extremism which will ultimately rebound on them. For the crux of any solution must invariably be the time-tested fact that Sikhs and Hindus have lived in harmony for centuries and that Punjab is physically, culturally and spiritually Indian, and that the Sikhs are part of the Indian family. There is no life apart for them, just as an India alienated from the Sikhs is inconceivable. —SUNIL SETHI with GOBIND THUKRAL and PRABHU CHAWLA

Chairman's Statement

SYLVANIA & LAXMAN LTD.

Laxman S. Agarwal

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to this 20th Annual General Meeting of your Company. I took over as the Chairman on 1st January, 1983, from Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora I consider it my privilege to place on record our sincere appreciation for the outstanding leadership afforded by Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora and the significant progress made by the Company during his tenure of office as Chairman. We are happy that he continues on the Board of the Company.

The Directors' Report and the Audited Accounts for the year ended 30th September, 1982, are already in your hands and with your permission I shall take them as read.

WORKING RESULTS

I am glad to say that your Company has had yet another year of good performance. The highlights of operations for the year 1981-82 are:

- Higher sales turnover of Rs.24.39 crores as against Rs.21.10 crores of the preceding year—an increase of 15%.
- Proposal for higher dividend of 15% as against 10% for the preceding year.
- Increase in net worth by Rs.134.57 lacs.
- Further improvement in the Debt-Equity ratio at 0.34 : 1 as against 0.74 : 1 last year end.
- Ploughing back of internal accrual of funds to the extent of Rs. 175.10 lacs.

The working of the Company for the year 1981-82 resulted in a profit of Rs.305.71 lacs after providing Rs.57.60 lacs for depreciation but subject to tax which works out to Rs.158.96 lacs. The said profit for the year has been good by any standard inspite of the rising cost of production and increased selling expenses in a competitive market.

You may have noticed that the equity share capital of the Company increased from Rs.2.19 crores to Rs.2.39 crores during the year. This was because of the Financial Institutions i.e. ICICI, IFC, IDBI, LIC exercising their option for conversion of Rs.20 lacs out of the term loan as per the conditions of the Loan Agreements.

During the year 1981-82 your Company was able to finance entirely from its own resources the re-building of one of its glass furnaces and installing an automatic Bulb Blowing machine, costing about Rs.150 lacs.

OPERATIONS

During the year under review the production has been maintained to an optimum level. The installation of the new Bulb Blowing machine and the furnace has been completed in record time. The efficiency of this unit has been excellent resulting in overall improvement in the efficiency of GLS lamps production. I am glad to inform you that during the first four months of the current year, the level of production and sales has been encouraging. The gross sales during the period October 1982 to January 1983 aggregated approximately Rs.8.61 crores as against Rs.8.14 crores during the corresponding period of the preceding year, recording an increase of about 6% on a provisional basis Your Company made a profit of about Rs.110 lacs during the said period of four months subject to tax, after providing Rs.25 lacs for depreciation. Barring any unforeseen factors the Company expects to be able to sustain this trend.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The actual demand for incandescent lamps for the year 1982-83 was assessed approximately at 270 million and that for fluorescent lamps at 32 million for the year. The market shares of your Company were about 14% and 11% respectively. The growth of demand for GLS lamps is expected at 7% per annum while for the fluorescent lamps at over 10% per annum. Production for GLS lamps is at present a little higher than the demand but the production of fluorescent lamps is insufficient to meet the requirement. As regards fluorescent lamps we are hopefully looking forward to increased availability in the near future.

The possibility of undertaking suitable expansion/diversification programmes for the future growth of your Company on proper lines is being explored by the Management. A new Planning Research and Development Cell has been created in the Company to look into this aspect.

Industrial growth had a setback during the year 1982 due to shortage of food production caused by failure of rains compared to previous years. The power shortage has been continuing for last 3 years in several areas of the country. There is need of rapid industrial growth which can be accelerated by following a pragmatic fiscal policy. The Government should encourage the new entrepreneurs. This can only be possible if there are savings with the individuals which is not possible in the present high incidence of income tax and wealth tax.

EFFECT OF BUDGET

In the Budget proposals recently announced, the Hon'ble Finance Minister has exempted excise duty on GLS lamps up to 60 W and has given 10% concession in the excise duty on fluorescent lamps. I am glad to mention that your Company has passed on the benefit to the consumers by adequately reducing the prices from 1st March, 1983.

The overall Budget proposals have been received by the Corporate Sector with a mixed feeling. I cannot help saying that the incentives given by the Government by way of higher depreciation allowance (from 10% to 15%) and reduction in the rate of interest on Bank Borrowings will have a marginal advantage but this will be set off by the increased cost of raw materials, petroleum products and freight etc. The increase in the rate of surcharge by 2.5% on Corporate tax in particular and disallowance of 20% of the expenditure on travelling and advertisment will erode a part of the net profits.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Your Company has maintained cordial relations with all the workers inspite of adverse circumstances prevailing, general unrest and strikes in various parts of the country particularly in the Western region. I thank the employees of the Company at all levels for their whole-hearted cooperation with the Management and dedication to service but for which the progress achieved by the Company would not have been possible. I am certain that the cordial relations which exist between your Company and its employees based on mutual trust and confidence is on firm foundation.

It is my pleasure to thank all my colleagues on the Board for their valued help and guidance extended to me. My thanks are also due to our collaborators M/s GTE Sylvania, U.S.A. and also to the Financial Institutions who have throughout extended their cooperation and help.

I would also like to thank the share holders and particularly those who are present here at this meeting for the confidence shown in the Management of your Company.

Laxman S. Agarwal
Chairman

March 21, 1983

Statement by Shri Laxman S. Agarwal, Chairman at the 20th Annual General Meeting of the Company held at New Delhi on Monday the 21st March 1983. This does not purport to be the proceedings of Annual General Meeting.

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Chairman

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982 was an eventful year when we produced 80,000 mopeds.

983 promises to be still more rewarding with our production of largest number of mopeds in India !

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MAL-NP-145

MADRAS

The Big Thirst

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHAVENDRA RAO

AN OLD man travelling to Madras recently was stopped at a police check-post. He pleaded to no avail that his jerrycan contained only water for his daughter in Madras. But when police opened the jerrycan they discovered to their consternation that he spoke the truth: it was filled with water.

Water. Madras is a city consumed by a powerful thirst. Its 4 million people live constantly on the brink of panic. Each morning brings hours of anxiety till at least a pot or two are filled with water. The signs of the crisis are visible everywhere. In the world-famous Kapaleshwarar temple devotees murmur desperate prayers for water. Outside the temple children have invaded the dry bed of the huge temple tank and converted it into a cricket field.

And on every street women and children shuffle along clutching misshapen pots. They collect in little knots around pumps and the 766 tanks that the Government has put up in the city's streets. At times the jostling develops into scuffles as people accuse others of taking more than their fair share of water.

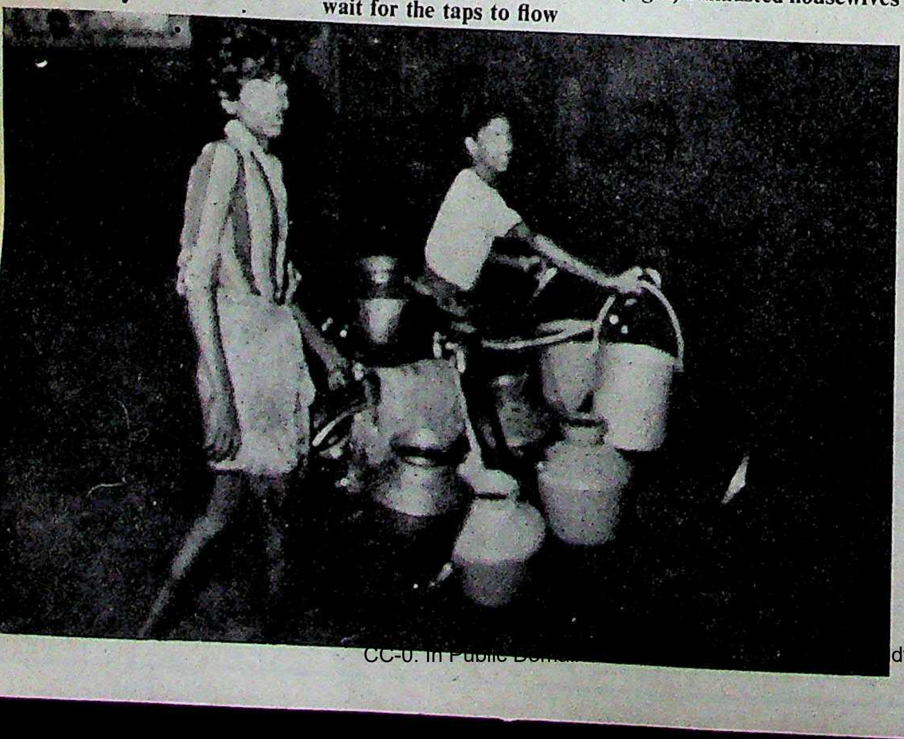
Good Business: The limited supply of water has given birth to a new breed of entrepreneur. Many are now in the hands of toughs who determine how much each person may have. Some of the men claim to be operating with the sanction of political parties—and this has led to some pumps being called DMK pumps and others being dubbed MGR pumps. But no matter which party they claim to represent the toughs make sure that they collect a fee of 10 paise per pot—all towards party funds, of course.

The roadside toughs are not the only ones who are profiting from the shortage. Many of the city's urchins earn their keep by collecting water for a fee. The business needs only a minimal investment. Murugavel, 30, of Saidapet was thrust into the business when he realised that his cycle and three pots could fetch him more than the Rs 25 a day he earned as a mason. Says Murugavel: "I make Rs 50 a day this way. Selling water is a booming business."

On a different scale everybody who owns a tanker or lorry has leapt into the business of bringing water to the city from the coastal areas. There are said to be 1,700 trucks on the job at the moment. The price makes the trip well worth it: Rs 250 per lorry-load for the big consumers. For small consumers the price varies between 50 paise and 75 paise a pot. In some areas the tankers are the only source of water. When they arrive, sloshing water as they come, most of the neighbourhood is sure to be out to receive them.

For the big consumers like hotels and hospitals the lorries are the only feasible way of staying open. Madras General Hospital, which usually takes in 2,000 people, has cut

Madras nightlife: enterprising youths transport water for sale and (right) exhausted housewives wait for the taps to flow



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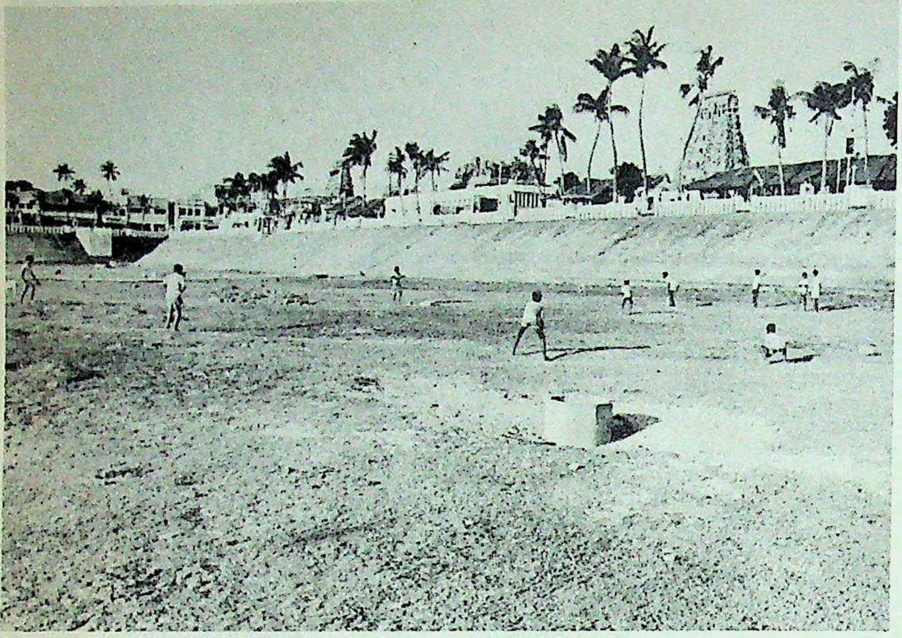
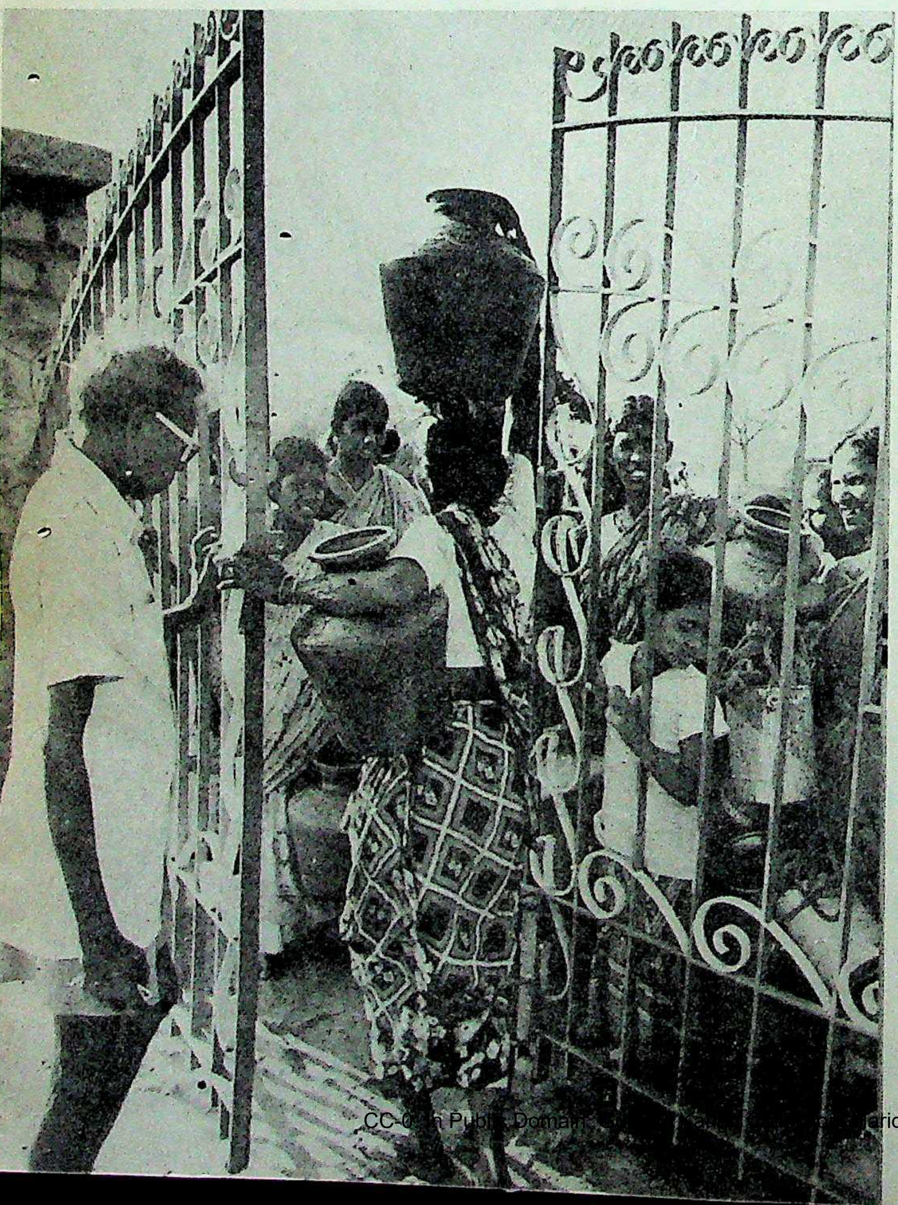
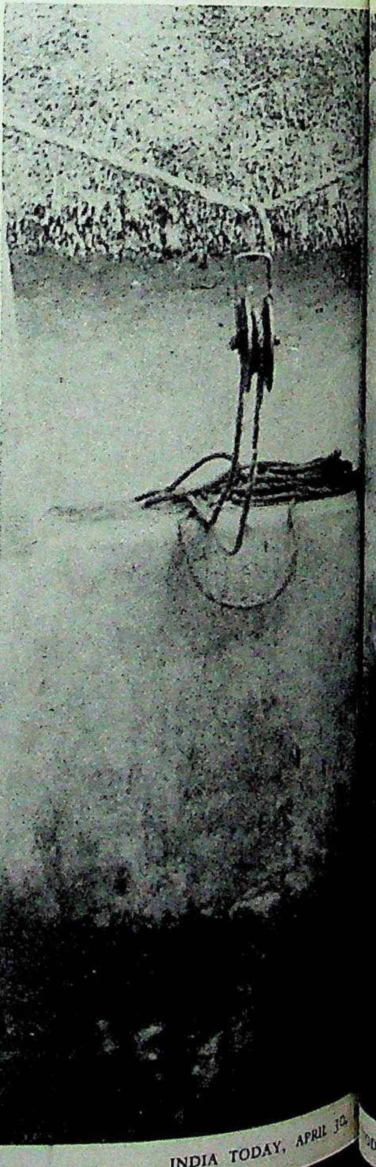


down its admissions by half. The hotel their water but at a high price. Says Noronha, chief engineer of the five Chola Sheraton: "Normally we get entire water supply from Metrowater. we have to pay Rs 2,000 a day. The co water is making a serious dent in finances."

Changed Life-style: Most househol the city have been forced to radically reor ise their lives in order to cope with the c For some the water shortage has meant they spend long hours sleeping by road pumps. Others drag themselves from be the middle of the night to join the queues. If they oversleep they are unlike get anything—Metrowater turns on its between 1 a.m. and 10 a.m. and only alternate days at that. Says Muniamma

(Anti-clockwise from left) Cricket in dry Kapaleshwarar temple tank; contro thirsty crowds in the city; an anxious checks the level in a well: government l get watered despite the drought





bakkam in West Madras: "I used s 5 a day as a labourer. Now I am ay fetching water and I cannot go m my livelihood."

no matter how early they get up, y is kept on short rations. Madras least 80 million gallons to stay p. At present it has to make do with gallons on alternate days, in other ly a quarter of its usual needs. ely many houses in the city have wells which do go a short way to ir problems. Says Kaniamma, 40, s a mile for water everyday: "A h has become a luxury."

troubles of the city have been up during the last three years when oons have failed. The real crunch, came in February as the summer n. The two reservoirs supplying the hills and Poondi—are on the way ng bowls of dust. And since the city g haphazardly and a lot of space is by buildings the earth beneath refuses to conserve water. Metrowater is now concentrating its efforts on digging borewells. Over 1,500 have been dug around the city at a cost of Rs 3,000 each. Many, however, are running dry after a few days and the Government is faced with the prospect of digging deeper for water.

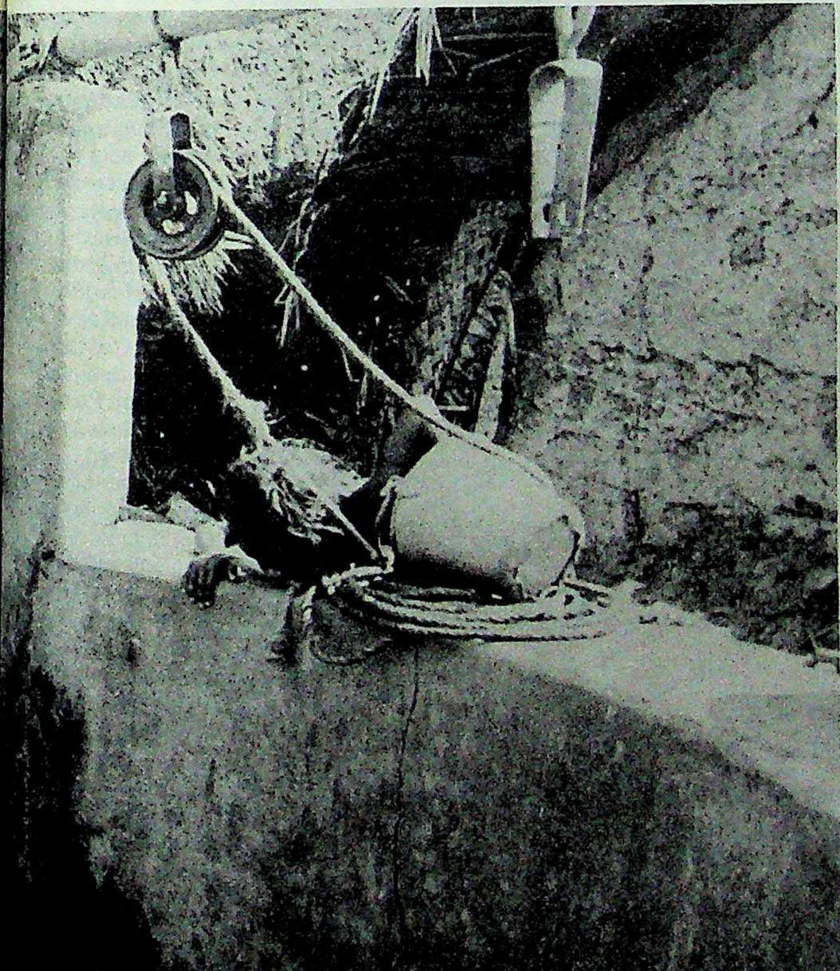
Desperate Measures: With the monsoon still months away the Government is more or less at its wits' end. It has held *yagnas* and called on rainmakers to precipitate matters. Now in its frenzy it is trying other equally eccentric measures to overcome the short term crisis. Even these, however, are snarled in a web of red tape and inter-state rivalries. The railways bring 0.5 million gallons of water into the city every day. The cost of this is nothing if not astronomical; expert reckoning has it that a pot of water of 20 litres is costing Rs 1.60. Now the Government is studying the feasibility of bringing water to the city by ship.

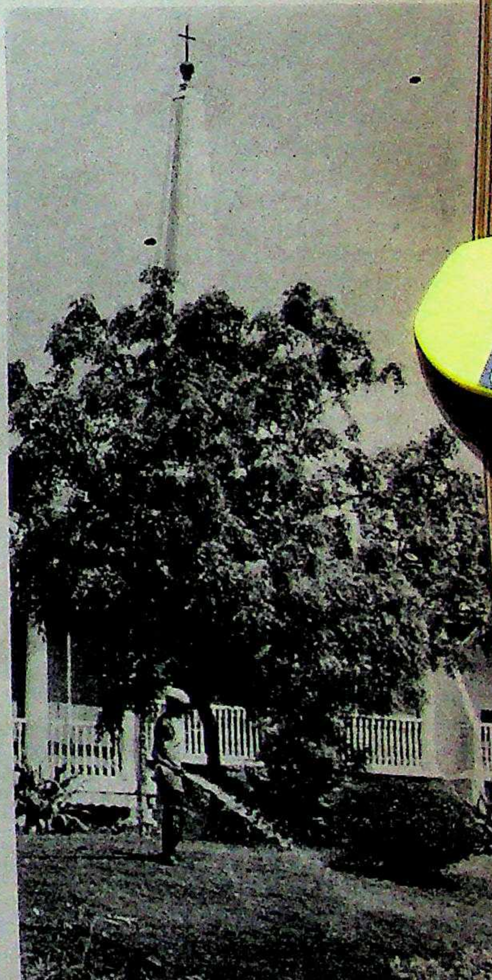
The truth of the matter is that the Government has no notion of how to solve the problem in the long run. If there are no rains by mid-June Metrowater plans to cut off water supply to non-essential industries in the Manali industrial suburb of Madras. That drastic step will save 12 million litres of water a day. Experts are discussing the possibility of desilting and restoring old tanks around the city.

Other experts are tossing about extravagant ideas like sealing off Pulicat Lake 30 km north of the city from the sea so that it eventually becomes salt-free, and serves as a catchment area for the city. While this may be expensive it will be only as costly as the other frequently mooted proposal of getting Krishna river water for the city from a distance of 500 km.

For the time being such schemes are no more than pies in a cloudless sky. But when the Government stirs from its haze of indecision it will have to face up to the stark truth that a city without water cannot live very long.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI and
RAGHAVENDRA RAO





HIMACHAL PRADESH

Command Performance

IT WAS the end of a controversial tenure marked by scandals, political intrigue and maladministration. Last fortnight, Thakur Ram Lal resigned as chief minister to pave the way for the installation of Virbhadra Singh, former Union minister of state, as Himachal Pradesh's fifth chief minister, amidst unconcealed jubilation in state Congress(I) circles.

Hardly a tear was shed for the outgoing chief minister by the 33 members of the Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP-I) who had assembled to elect their new leader in the teak-panelled conference room of the Assembly. While they cheered Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting H.K.L. Bhagat's announcement of the high command's decision to accept Lal's resignation, 2,000 state Congress(I) workers stood outside shouting slogans welcoming the change. A resolution introduced by Lal's protégé, Shiv Kumar, lauding his 1,048 days in office was adopted more as a formality.

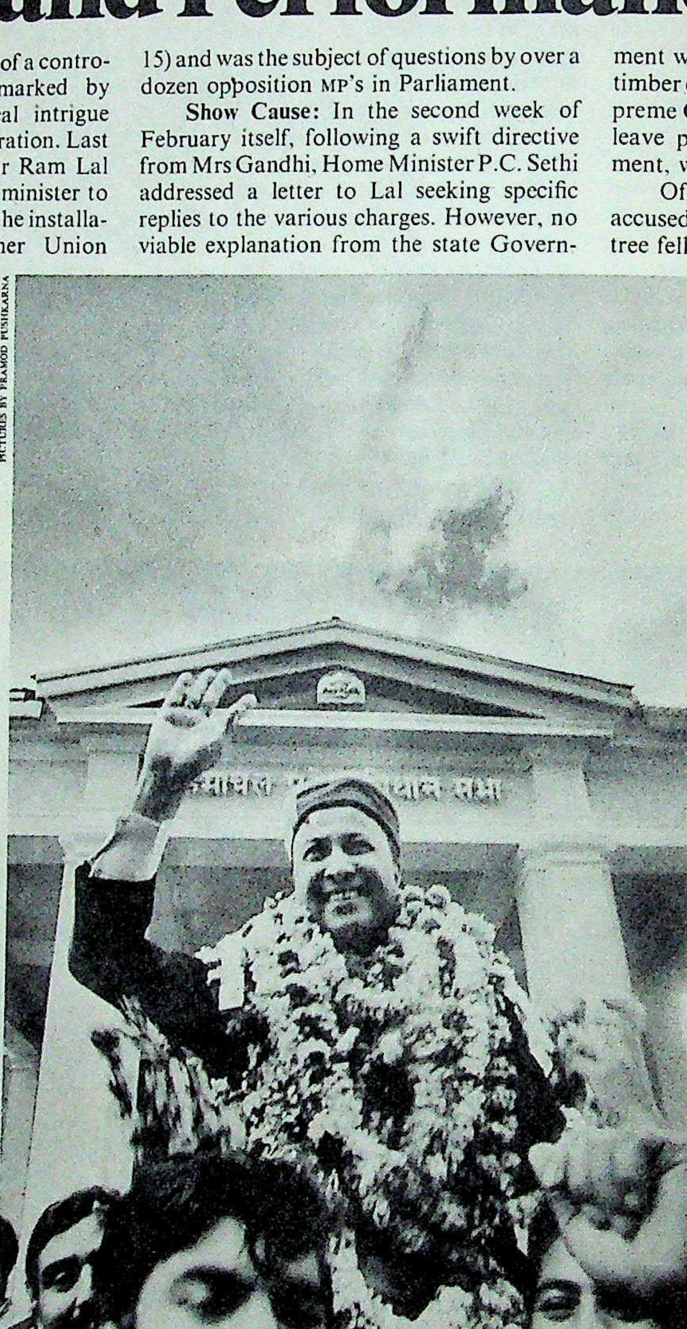
Soon after, Lal proposed Singh's name in a previously agreed move that was shrewdly orchestrated by master of ceremonies Bhagat. The motion was seconded by outgoing Public Works Minister Sukh Ram, a strong contender for the state's premier post. One hour later, Singh was formally sworn in as chief minister. Said he: "I am obliged to the legislature party for having reposed confidence in me. But at the same time, I am also grateful to both Mrs Gandhi and Rajivji for having permitted me to take up this onerous responsibility."

Lal's departure followed Justice Vyas Dev Mishra's judgement on January 14, 1983, in the case on the alleged timber smuggling involving his son Jagdish and his friend Mast Ram Taunta. The scandal received widespread exposure in the media (INDIA TODAY, February 15) and was the subject of questions by over a dozen opposition MP's in Parliament.

Show Cause: In the second week of February itself, following a swift directive from Mrs Gandhi, Home Minister P.C. Sethi addressed a letter to Lal seeking specific replies to the various charges. However, no viable explanation from the state Government was forthcoming, on the plea tha
timber case was *sub judice*. Currently, th
preme Court is considering Taunta's s
leave petition challenging Mishra's j
ment, which it admitted on April 8, 19

Of all the issues Lal's governmen
accused of soft pedalling, large-scale
tree felling proved to be its major und

PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Virbhadra Singh after his election: smooth succession

Till March 31, 1983, the
Enforcement Department
the police had registered
700 cases of timber smug
worth over Rs 90 lakh. W
first information reports
filed in each case, only in
cases involving timber wor
30 lakh were the alleged o
ders actually charge-sheet
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could be secured in a me
such cases.

In addition, many C
ress(I) leaders sent detailed
moranda to the prime min
listing acts of omission
commission committed by L
government. Lal's depar
was hastened by an ill-adv
press conference in New D
on April 5, 1983, where he
med that Rajiv Gandhi, gen
secretary of the All India C
gress Committee(I) in char
Himachal Pradesh affairs,
assured him that he would
be disturbed. Three days l
after investigations by in
gence and unofficial agen
Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv Ga
decided that Lal had becom
liability to the party.

Strong Contenders: W
it was easy to sack Lal, it
difficult to find an accept
replacement who could en
stability of the Congre
government, which has a wa
thin majority in the 68-mem
Assembly. Prominent am
the contenders in the fact
ridden state CLP(I)
the Centre's choice,
bhadra Singh; the anti-Lal
by's Sukh Ram; and Lal's
nominees, Shiv Kumar
Bijender Singh. While Ku
who defected from the Ja
after Mrs Gandhi's 1980 vic
was Lal's real choice, Bije

hails from a princely family, was neutralise Virbhadra Singh's by.

to find a consensus candidate, directed Bhagat and K.P. Tiwa- ha MP from Allahabad, to con- ection of a new leader. Stiff as expected in the CLP(I) meeting e hard line adopted by warring d the threat of five MLA's to quit a candidate of their choice was Nevertheless, by deft manoeuv- 0-hour discussion with MLA's, ceeded in narrowing down the Singh. Said a triumphant Bhagat: emphatically that the high com- impose anyone on the CLP(I). In Congress(I) in Himachal Pradesh exemplary discipline in electing ader unanimously and have assu- ll cooperation."

Minister Virbhadra Singh, 49, to state politics. Known for his d loyalty to the party, Singh has gress faithful through the Emer- the trying Janata days. Suave and g, Singh joined Congress politics on after he completed post-gra- es from Delhi University's St College. He was elected to the Lok m Himachal Pradesh in 1962, a he lost to the Janata in 1977. Janata regime, he was appointed Pradesh Congress Committee(I) resident and managed the party's ciently. Re-elected in 1980, he e Centre first as a Lok Sabha later become a Union minister. 's choice was hailed by both the y and the Opposition. Said Har- ngh, HPCC(I) general secretary: "People of Himachal Pradesh have finally got a clean, honest and dedicated chief minister who will look after the interests of the masses and not of the chosen few." Added opposition leader Shanta Kumar: "With the change in state leadership, our stand on corruption charges against the state Government has been vindicated. I welcome the appointment of Virbhadra Singh as the new chief minister. I am sure that administrative decisions will now be taken on merit."

Singh's major worry is his own faction-ridden party and the vested interests which are deep-rooted in the administration. His very survival in office depends on his capacity to retain, and if possible, expand the party's precarious majority in the Assembly. While he firmly disassociates himself from the tendency to encourage defections from the Opposition and asserts his government's stability, he nevertheless adds: "All those who have faith in the policies and programmes of our leader Mrs Gandhi are welcome to join our party."

In the present situation, however, he may find it difficult to take strong measures against corruption because many of his party colleagues will force him to soft-pedal various issues. Even in the allegedly illicit timber trade, several prominent Congress(I) leaders are involved. It will also be difficult to exclude from the ministry, many of these members with tarred images because each of them has the support of at least one MLA. Notwithstanding these factors, Singh emphasises that with regard to the recent high court judgement on scandals in the state, "I will honour and implement all judicial pronouncements and directions, irrespective of the individuals involved." He adds: "I will get the application of the National Security Act (NSA) examined and if there is no legal hitch, I will not hesitate in putting timber smugglers behind the bars under NSA."

Pro-loyalist: Another thorny issue relates to the on-going fight between 'original' and 'new' Congressmen in the state. Lal's policy of pampering over a dozen Congress(I) MLA's who had deserted Mrs Gandhi during the Janata phase has outraged the loyalists. Since Singh's preference for the 'originals' is well known, he may face problems from the 'new' ones. Says Singh: "I firmly believe that those who suffered during the Janata regime should not feel cheated now." Congress(I) circles, however, feel that Singh will find going tough in the present CLP(I), in which many people with doubtful loyalty to the party exist.

There is also the dubious administrative legacy of the Lal regime, which had given special assistance to the old Himachal, which comprises six districts, in the form of recruitment and financial allocation. It was the widening gulf between these old areas and the new ones that helped the Bharatiya Janata Party gain ground in the state. Since Singh is equally respected in both the regions, he will have to redraft his financial priorities to ensure greater integration.

In addition, the new Government faces the uphill task of revamping the state administration which is divided into various groups led by senior officials. During Lal's tenure, junior and controversial officers were given important portfolios as heads of various departments, deputy commissioners and district-level police functionaries. Even the top police hierarchy was vertically divided when Lal superseded Tangbir Singh, an Indian Police Service official, and appointed I.J.S. Sodhi as the state's inspector general of police. Though Singh later won the case he had filed challenging the decision, he was still denied the post.

Financial Crisis: The embattled administration has adversely affected the state's finances, which are in a mess. Although the state Government claimed that it had mobilised additional resources worth Rs 43 crore during 1982-83, the lion's share came from the employees' provident fund and small savings in which the state had little role to play. Only the forest revenue showed an improvement. As a result of the dwindling resources, no new major irrigation, water and power projects could be taken up during the last two years.

But before he can hope to accomplish these onerous tasks, Chief Minister Singh will have to get himself elected to the state Assembly by October 1983. Success at the hustings will not only endorse his selection but also prove his popular support in the state. Testing times lie ahead for the new incumbent. —PRABHU CHAWLA in Simla

er chief minister Ram Lal (right) and Bhagat (with glasses) congratulate Singh

20-POINT PROGRAMME

Inflated Claims

GOVERNMENTS have a tendency to exaggerate their achievements. This was more than evident last fortnight at the first meeting of chief ministers called by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to review the progress of her new 20-point programme which she unveiled with much fanfare in March last year. Predictably, Congress(I) chief ministers were ahead of all others in extolling the work done on the programme, grandly termed the 'Agenda for the Nation', in their states. Not to be outdone, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting H.K.L. Bhagat ordered the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity to pull out all the stops in its campaign to publicise the rousing achievements under the programme. In fact, if everything that the chief ministers said at the meeting and in the large advertisements each took out in newspapers before the meeting is true, then India is well on the way to becoming the land of milk and honey.

The truth, of course, is not all that rosy, as the Planning Commission's detailed progress report for 1982-83 makes clear. After spending the colossal sum of Rs 8,000 crore on the programme, all the states taken together managed to complete 80 per cent of their targets and over in only five of the 20 points: the rehabi of bonded labour, the provi drinking water for 35,000-od blem villages, tree planting, the sion of primary health sub- and the establishment of IC tegrated child development s centre in 300-odd blocks.

THE OVERACHIEVERS
20-POINT PROGRAMME

	FIGURES IN '000 NUMBER	REPORTED ACHIEVEMENT (FEB.1983)	AVERAGE (APR-JAN. 82-83)	HIGHEST
ANDHRA	HOUSE SITES (NUMBER)	32.4	16.9	29.0
BIHAR	IRDP (FAMILIES ASSISTED)	39.6	12.1	25.9
	DRINKING WATER (NO. OF VILLAGES)	0.73	0.13	0.16
	STERILISATION (NUMBER)	79.8	15.0	46.5
KARNATAKA	SC WELFARE (FAMILIES ASSISTED)	32.1	5.2	8.7
	EWS HOUSES (NUMBER)	6.6	1.0	3.4
KERALA	IRDP (FAMILIES ASSISTED)	22.4	7.2	10.1
M.P.	DRINKING WATER (NO. OF VILLAGES)	0.80	0.45	0.54
	SLUM POPULATION (NUMBER)	76.6	3.5	32.6
MAHARASHTRA	DRINKING WATER (NO. OF VILLAGES)	1.0	0.14	0.29
	HOUSE SITES (NUMBER)	7.6	1.1	3.3
	CONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE (NO.)	12.0	2.1	3.3
TAMIL NADU	IRDP (FAMILIES ASSISTED)	33.2	18.7	25.6
	EWS HOUSES (NUMBER)	4.1	1.1	2.6
	STERILISATION (NUMBER)	42.5	17.4	31.2
U.P.	NREP (NO. OF MANDAYS)	11633.0	1975.0	4974.0
	SC WELFARE (FAMILIES ASSISTED)	60.9	14.1	37.0
	HOUSE SITES (NUMBER)	35.6	6.2	12.8
	STERILISATION (NUMBER)	74.4	30.8	60.7
	DRINKING WATER	2.7	0.31	0.94

Chart by B.K. Sharma

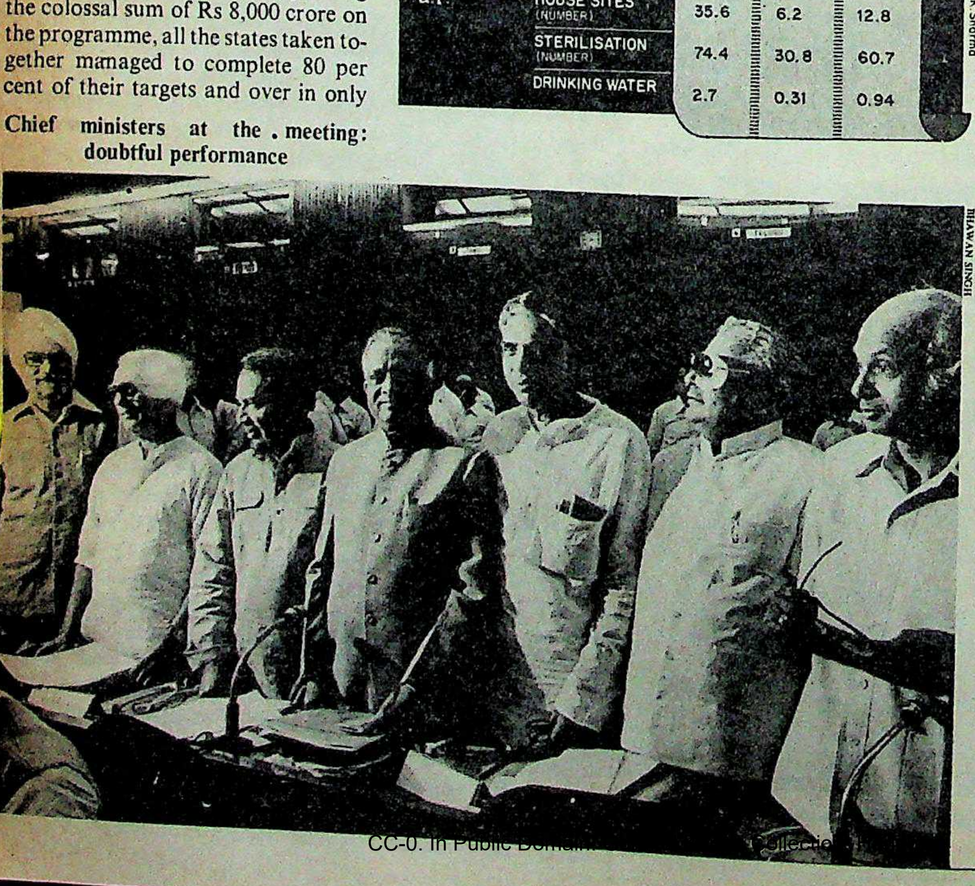
There is little cheer fo Gandhi. Only two of the Congr ruled states, Himachal Prades Rajasthan, could complete mor 80 per cent of the targets in a m of the schemes. Nine Cong states could not achieve even t tional average for the various p which ranged from a low of 41 cent (financial assistance for co ting houses) to a high of 103 cent (provision of drinking wat

Big Spurt: That, however, one layer of the truth. Perhap most striking achievement und new 20-point programme i sudden burst of activity in the m preceding the chief ministers' me which the report documents in xure-II. Bihar, for instance, clai have assisted 39,589 families und integrated rural development gramme in February; as its mo average in the preceding 10 m —April 1982 to January 1983 12,116 and the highest for any m was 25,864, there is ample reas doubt the February figure.

February was indeed the m of the Great Leap Forward. again, provided drinking water villages in the month, whil monthly average earlier was 13 the highest for any previous m was 160. Maharashtra has done better: it brought drinking wa 1,010 villages in February, a spec lar jump from the monthly avera 138. No wonder, then, that the ning Commission pointedly h Annexure-II: "Achievements i bruary 1983 which would bear cross-checked."

Caution: The Planning Com ion's officials, who did not have t sources to be able to check out a figures pouring in from all over I were plainly uneasy over the c Even before the report starts r off figures point by point, it say guarded paragraph: "It is only fied caution that when performa February is extraordinarily high pared to both the average and performance in the past, that the governments and the concerned stries should check the perform

Chief ministers at the meeting: doubtful performance



BHAWAN SINGH

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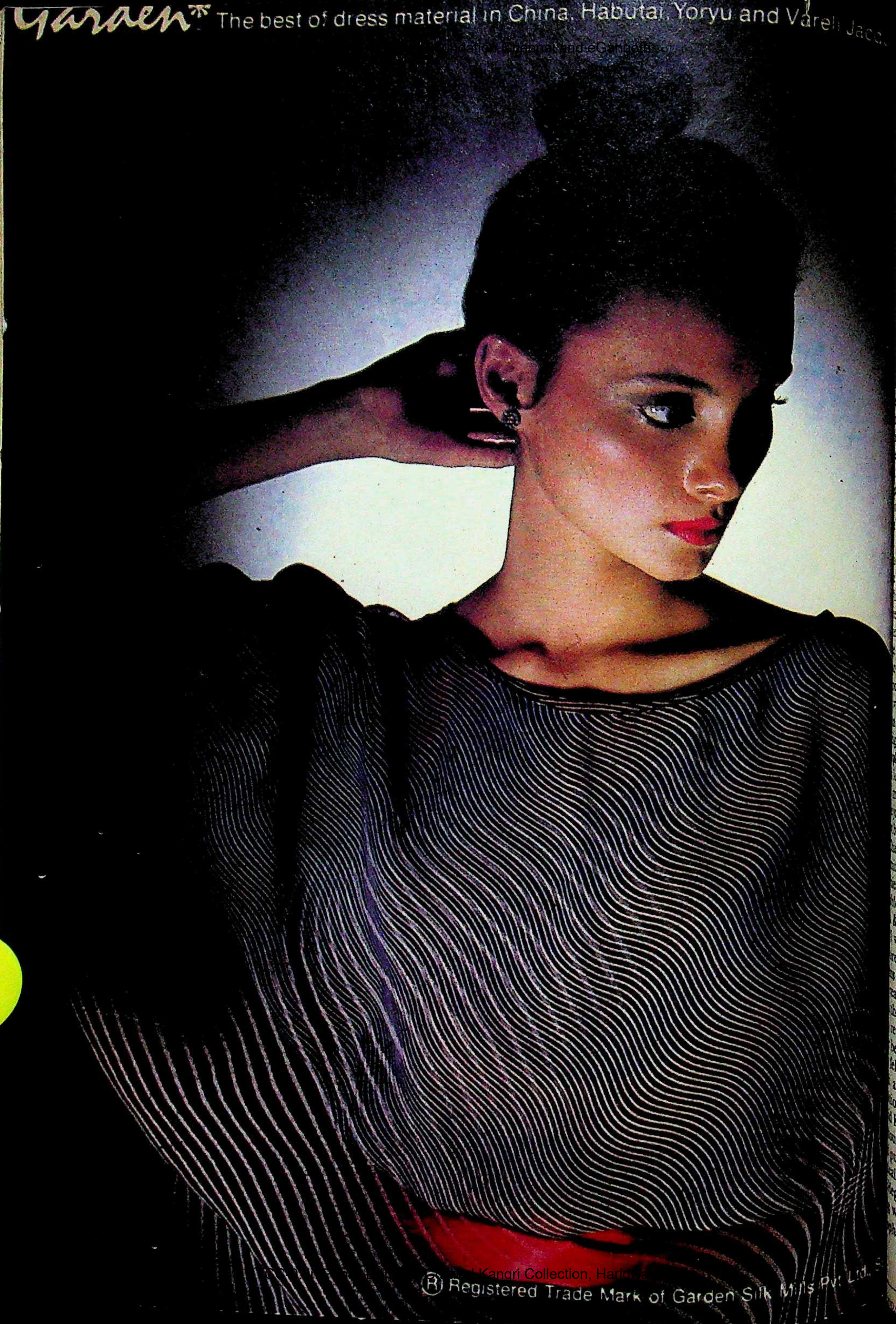
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egde's sobering comments at the
were all but drowned in the chorus
hantic hallelujahs.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

MAHARASHTRA

Open Discord

THE HONEYMOON was clearly over. Less than two months after it was formed, the Vasantdada Patil ministry in Maharashtra showed its first signs of domestic discord. Patil and his Deputy Chief Minister Ramrao Adik had a tiff which threatened, unless it could be speedily settled, to be the start of a disastrous inner-party battle. At issue was the selection of a replacement for Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (MPCC-I) chief Gulabrao Patil, an Antulay nominee whom most state Congressmen are agreed on replacing. Said a senior Congressman and one-time minister: "Madam has deliberately imposed Adik and his group of ministers on Dada as a caretaker or chaperone, thereby creating a ministry with divided loyalties. She should not now be surprised if they are fighting."

Adik (left) and Patil: serious rift

Matters came to a head late last month, when Congress(I) President Kamalapati Tripathi announced to the Delhi press that the high command had decided to appoint Professor S.M.I. Aseer, transport minister in Patil's Cabinet and minister in both the Antulay and Bhosale governments as MPCC(I) chief. A known Antulay supporter who was sacked by Bhosale because of his highly-publicised dissident campaign, Aseer is reckoned to Adik's nominee and the deputy minister lobbied vigorously in New Delhi to push his candidature. Predictably, the appointment was seen by Patil and his supporters as another move to weaken his hold on the Government. Adik's nominees in the ministry outnumber his own (see INDIA TODAY, February 28, 1983).

Reacting swifty, Patil flew to Delhi and made it clear to members of the Congress(I) high command that an Adik nominee in the key post of pradesh Congress chief was completely unacceptable to him. He reportedly added that he would resign his post if the Aseer appointment went through. With Assembly elections due in only two years, the MPCC(I) chief would carry considerable weight in the allotment of seats, which could spell doom for Patil.

Temporary Reprieve: Hastily backtracking to prevent an open split, Tripathi and Congress Parliamentary Board observer for Maharashtra, G.K. Moopanar informed pressmen that the announcement was a mistake; the matter was still "under consideration". Joining the general chorus, both Patil and Adik asserted that they were completely in agreement. Patil stated that he had never threatened to resign, and Adik added that Aseer was not his nominee.

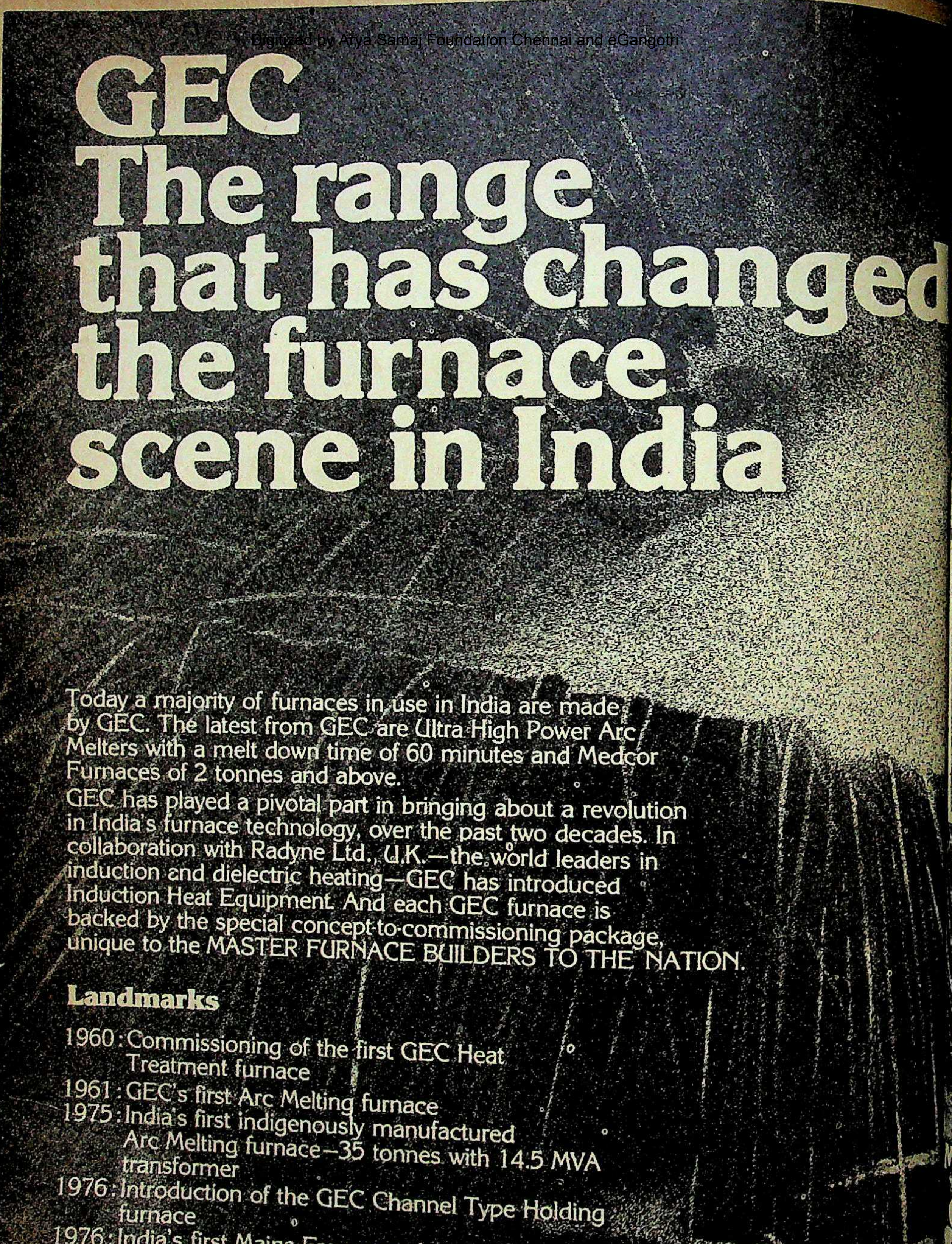
But the protestations were scant comfort to Congress(I) politicians in Maharashtra, who saw in the current tangle ominous portents for the future. Already party insiders admit that Adik's group of ministers, in a virtual replay of the Vasantdada Patil-Nasikrao Tirpude coalition ministry of 1978, hold separate meetings to decide on their strategy before each Cabinet meeting; others allege that the bureaucracy plays off the two against each other, taking files on key issues first to one and then to the other to get contrasting decisions. Said former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale: "The purpose of a change of government was to revitalise the party with a view to the 1985 elections; but if the changes result in this type of struggle for power, it defeats the whole purpose."

No Solution: Many of the contenders were ruled out because they would add to the already considerable Maratha dominance in the state. Ahmed Zakaria, a minority leader reportedly recommended by Patil as more suitable than Aseer, is a little-known politician.

Sudhakar Naik, education minister in Patil's Cabinet and a Vidarbha leader who is strongly backed by the chief minister for the post, is unacceptable to most partymen because he left the party and only rejoined only in 1978; and Nanabhau Embadwar, who joined the party with a group led by Vidarbha strongman Jambuvantrao Dhote, and is currently rural development minister in the Patil Government, could well be barred for breach of party discipline.

Last fortnight, former party chief Premalatai Chavan and former minister Baburao Kale brought loyalist Congressmen together to attempt a viable solution. However, state Congressmen suspect that Mrs Gandhi might still instal Aseer to dilute Patil's clout.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH



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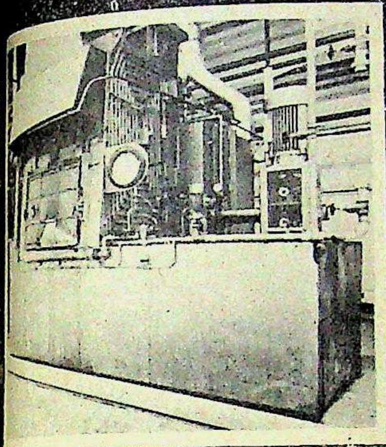

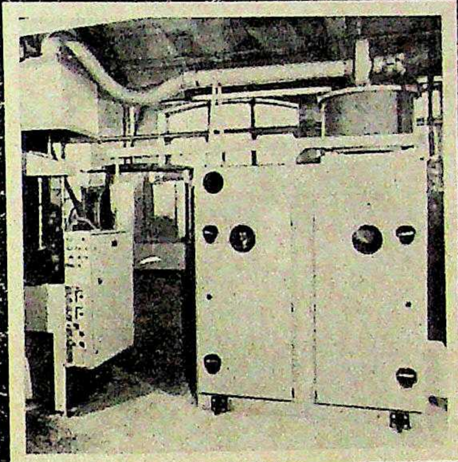

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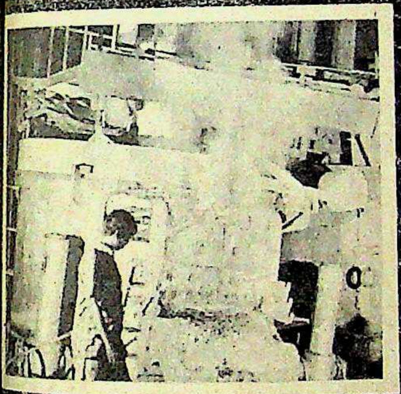

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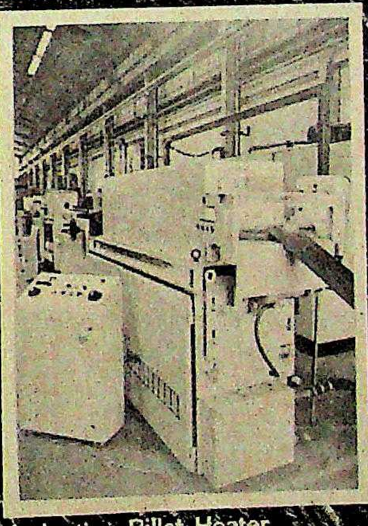
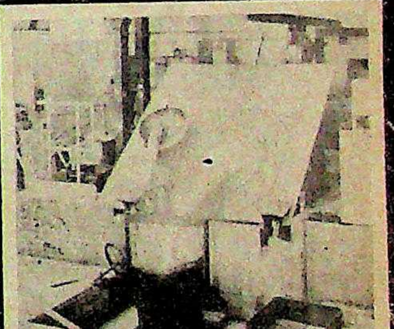


Induction Billet Heater



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ELECTION COMMISSION

Debate On Reform

NECESSITY is the mother of invention. Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde with his paper-thin majority in the Assembly, and the example of S. Bangarappa crossing the floor fresh in his mind, has quickly moved to checkmate any threat to his position by making electoral reform the first priority of his ministry: specifically, a bill against defections. At the national level, however, attempts to reform electoral law have mostly been still-born. In 1974 and in 1978 anti-defection bills introduced in Parliament were rapidly smothered. In the last 12 years, three electoral reform committees have submitted voluminous reports—and the reports have usually gathered dust.

In an attempt to rethink election law, Election Commissioner R.K. Trivedi suggested specific, and some controversial, changes at a seminar in the capital organised by the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies and in the process, sparked off a lively debate. The seminar was preceded by a package deal Trivedi had presented to the Government on September 26 last year, four months after he took over as election commissioner.

While expressing approval of the Karnataka bill on defection. Trivedi called for a similar alteration at the national level. The Karnataka bill gives to the state "the power to take action against defecting members", not to the extent of outright disqualification but the power to impose restrictions that would virtually make defecting members completely ineffective. Said Trivedi: "Let us accept that more didactic sermons or appeals to moral values will yield no results."

One of Trivedi's more controversial proposals is his safeguard against mushrooming parties and candidates. First suggested by Vice-President M. Hidayatullah, it stipulates that political parties which win less than one-sixth of the vote should be de-recognised. Trivedi feels national and state parties should be recognised only after they have secured a minimum of 8 per cent in a majority of states; and the percentage of votes for the purposes of registration as a political party should be raised from one to four.

Controversial Proposals: The proposal, however, has met with objections, the foremost being that it would prevent the minority point of view from being heard. Moreover, it would only underwrite the supremacy of the Congress(I). Said H.N. Bahuguna, Democratic Socialist Party leader: "In a pluralistc society like ours you can't contain parties as in countries like Pakistan, Egypt and Thailand. The multiplicity of parties in India reflects the varied composition. Do you mean to say, for example, that the 8 per cent industrial workers in the country should not have a representative political party?"

Trivedi: specific suggestion

Other electoral reforms suggested by Trivedi include:

- greater autonomy for the election commissioner in controlling the elections. There should be a separate secretariat for the commission as well as independent machinery of the commissioner's choice at the state level;
- compulsory maintenance of accounts by political parties and audits by agencies recommended by the commission;
- the misuse of official machinery should be treated as a corrupt practice and be liable to prosecution;
- effective control during polling to deal with the existing practices of booth capturing, coercion and intimidation.

Advani, Tarkunde and Bahuguna: raising serious objections

Prominent leaders have had enough of long-winded analyses on election law changes. Remarked Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L.K. Advani: "There is no dearth of studies and analyses made on the issue of electoral reform or of specific r mendations made to the Government i regard. What is needed is the politic to implement them." V.M. Tarkunde, Citizens for Democracy forum has st the law intensively, is sceptical: should the party in power, whichever kick the ladder by which it got to po

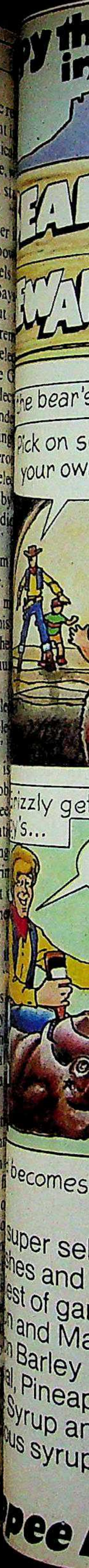
Basic Question: Bahuguna feels Trivedi has missed the real point. Says "Trivedi has talked mainly about essentials while the basic question rem unanswered, that is, the role of the ele commissioner. My experience in the G wal by-election and the Assam elec highlights the need for a completely ind dent election commissioner. Stuffing Election Commission is more dangero fact than stuffing the courts. The ele commissioner should be selected by Supreme Court and potential candid should be retired high court judges."

Advani, however, feels the Assam tions were an exception to any rule. best of election laws would have been m ingless in Assam." Trivedi defends his in the Assam polls by insisting that he no option but to hold elections becau the constitutional obligations.

"But by doing so he has put the ele commissioner into a subordinate role acquiesced with the Government." Advani. "The election commissioner is concerned with the constitutional ob tions; his role is only to ensure that free fair elections can be held." Constitut expert Soli Sorabjee agrees: "The timing holding of an election may be a prin function of the Government but that not absolve the election commission his constitutional obligations not to elections in conditions which render a mockery." Adds Tarkunde: chief election commissioner was in a very awkward position by Government, but all the same he sh have insisted on certain essential quisites being maintained before ca elections."

This raises a number of ques on the role of the election com sioner. Should the Constitution amended to enable him to take a view on whether or not an emergency sho be imposed? Can the election commissio request the governor of any state to m polling staff available for a general elec in another state? Should there be a provi in the Constitution to meet such contige as arose in Assam when the Constitu could not be amended or emergency p claimed and yet elections had to be he Electoral reform is a distant reality Trivedi has at least breathed life int dormant issue.

—COOMI KAP



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Grrr...!
Dipy the kid vs the big bad bear!
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Take that!
And that!
Dipy Dee Dipy Doo..
becomes the sweetest bear you've ever seen!
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htriya Sanjay Manc

Maneka and party leaders at the convention: well-ordered ostentation

RIYA SANJAY MANCH

aneka's Melange

EATH glittering plastic chande- rs and amid stereophonic rende- gs of patriotic songs, Maneka 's political party, the Rashtriya Manch (RSM), got underway in New t fortnight. There was little to sug- t the launch was a modest, low-key pected of a fledgling party—even 's mother-in-law may have baulked ctacle. Five years ago when she her- ched the Congress(I) with a hur- anned convention, it hardly seemed ark occasion for want of accom- fanfare.

such simplicities for the RSM. Its l convention at Ferozeshah Kotla on April 3 brought back memories ll-ordered ostentation that epitomi- Sanjay era. Entering through huge archways labelled 'Sanjay Nagar' and 'Sanjay Dwar' crowds of delegates (some 5,000 showed up from all parts of the country) sat under frilled shamianas facing a massive stage which spelled out the new party's name in star-dust. An equally massive hoarding, with Maneka and her late husband flanking a map of India, formed the stage backdrop. As the ceremonies began with Maneka unfurling the party flag, the international media turned on their cameras to catch all the tinsel trappings.

If nothing else, Maneka has managed to retain her entertainment value, though she is at pains to stress that her following now consists of much more than a travelling tamasha. Those who show up—and her convention was not a public meeting but a formal party launching—are still eager to lap up her snide insinuations about the Gandhi family. The irony of her situation, though, is not lost on members of the audience. As an onlooker outside the convention remarked: "So what if she fights for elections? She'll only carry it off because of the Gandhi name."

Sensationalism: But the entire affair is still a family drama that holds unfailing interest for the media and the public at large: last year, Maneka was the beleaguered widow booted out by an imperious mother-in-law; this year, she's playing the spirited daughter-in-law fighting back. Only the setting has changed—from the domestic disharmony of 1 Safdarjung Road to the ground-level dust of national politics. Shrewd enough to realise that she may be overplaying the poor-widow hand, Maneka no longer harps on the fact. She lets her allies do it. Her chief lieutenant and organisation man, Akbar Ahmed, the Uttar Pradesh MLA, mentioned it at least three times in his speech among the long list of injustices wrought by Mrs Gandhi.

Maneka stuck to issues of national

import (she spoke in English, she claimed, for the benefit of delegates who could not understand Hindi) such as corruption, unemployment and centralisation of power. "There isn't a single member of the Government who has not had corruption charges levelled against him or her," she said in schoolgirlish tones. "The nation today is under siege."

Familiar Tactics: The difference in the launchings of the two Mrs Gandhis is only superficial. For as Maneka rolled in at her convention, copying exactly the brisk gait of the prime minister and looking uncannily like Mrs Gandhi in a cheerful yellow cotton sari, a foreign correspondent wryly remarked that perhaps the RSM's real name should have been the Maneka(I) Party. There were full-colour blow-ups of Maneka selling outside for Rs 2 a copy. And there was hardly a delegate who did not sport a Maneka badge, like the ones Bhagwan Rajneesh dispenses to the faithful.

Maneka's disciples are an equally motley lot, made up of erstwhile Sanjaymen who have been consciously weeded out with the revamping of the Youth Congress(I), or dissatisfied Congress(I) politicians. Says S.M. Ganesh Raj, former general secretary of the Karnataka PCC(I) and now president of the RSM in the state: "I left the Congress(I) because of the disgusting politics of Gundu Rao. There are many people like me. We now want to mobilise fresh blood to create a cadre-based organisation in the state and discourage defectors from joining our party."

Adds Kalpnath Sonkar, RSM MP from Uttar Pradesh: "The people want something new in politics. They voted for Sanjay because he was new; now Maneka is." Sonkar claims that it was not difficult for him to bring a contingent of 350 delegates from his constituency in Uttar Pradesh to attend the convention; Ganesh Raj says he brought about 300 from Karnataka. And Akbar Ahmed claims that 9,000 to 10,000 delegates from all over India attended the convention, about 60 per cent of them paying a delegate's fee of Rs 10 besides paying for their trips.

Maneka herself believes that the convention, which she estimates cost about Rs 50,000, paid for itself through delegates' fees and sales of her 30,000 posters that were bought up in virtually no time. Charged with promoting herself as party leader in the style of her mother-in-law, Maneka says that delegates wore badges with her picture "mainly for a sense of identification", and that "the posters of me were printed to recover the convention's costs". She insists that she is far from establishing a Maneka cult and hers is a party where "workers get praised or criticised, exactly as they praise or criticise me when I take any action".

Shrewd Campaigner: Smoothly rebutting all criticism of her party's launch as an impressive tamasha, interesting only for its entertainment value like her hugely-attended public meetings in the states, Maneka quotes specific instances of RSM work. "In Nagpur we have agitated for a covered shed for the orange market, whereas earlier 30 per cent of the fruit was damaged in the open-air sheds. In Amethi, RSM workers have helped resolve Shia-Sunni tensions and add several rooms to a local girls' school."

Amethi, once her husband's and now her brother-in-law's constituency from where she is determined to fight the next election is, she says, directly supervised by her. "You don't nurture a constituency by going on padayatras," she says alluding to Rajiv Gandhi's recent walkabouts; "you fight an election by establishing confidence in the people. I won't have to fight the election in Amethi; my people will fight it for me." Boasts Ahmed: "If Rajiv stands for election against Maneka this year he'll lose his deposit in Amethi."

Maneka, Ahmed and members of the RSM are keen to spread the word of a mid-term poll in 1983 as a certainty. Ahmed argues that there is no other reason why the prime minister and her son should travel to Amethi so frequently; Maneka says: "I know for a fact that they (Congress-I) have ordered 8,000 jeeps and 3 crore posters, and they are already hiring polling agents in Amethi." As for her own preparations for the poll, Maneka says she is deep in the process of identifying constituencies that the RSM will contest nation-wide and selecting candidates for them. Nevertheless, her detractors feel that her conviction of a mid-term poll may be nothing but a ploy to attract more defectors.

With two MP's and seven MLA's—including former Union deputy finance minister Maganbhai Barot—and a claimed membership of over 8 lakh, the RSM, according to Lalit Mohan Singh, president of its Bihar wing, is the party of India's future. Even so, the additional MP's and MLA's from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who are frequently rumoured to be joining the party refuse to materialise.

Much of the RSM's prowess seems to stem from its leader's mixture of tactical self-assurance and shrewd stage-management. Says Lalit Mohan Singh of its Bihar wing incredibly: "If a snap general election were to be called, there is no doubt that the RSM would form the Government. Each and every Bihari has a soft corner for Manekaji. Bihar is the mother of corruption today. And may God bless Mrs Indira Gandhi for supporting Jagannath Mishra's corrupt Government, so that the longer he stays in power, the greater our chances of taking over." Seeing is believing, of course; but if anyone for the moment will lend their ears to the RSM then the battle of the Gandhis is just beginning.

—SUNIL SETHI

TAMIL NADU

Courtroom Drama

THE JUDICIARY a legislature are bracing fight in Tamil Nadu, bold move last fort Justice T. Sathia Dev Madras High Court ted a *quo warranto* (lite 'on whose authority') writ petition fi Arcot N. Veerasami, a Dravida Mu Kazhagam (DMK) MLC, seeking to disp M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) of his o chief minister. The judge directed is notice to MGR for committing "consti nal improprieties" in a speech to the Le tive Assembly, made on February 2.

The chief minister's controversial

MGR: under legal attack

ment had decried the practice of cou granting indiscriminate stays on govern measures without looking into their repercussions or even giving due consid tion to the Government's point of view. rasami claimed that this was tantamou comment on the conduct of judges, in violation of Article 211 of the Constit which prohibits any discussion in the le ture on the conduct of judges in the disc of their duties.

Quo warranto writ petitions again gislators are a rarity, and there are instances in legal history where they been entertained. Legislative privilege deliberately grey area which has been lef codified. Article 212 of the Constitu expressly forbids courts from enquiring the constitutional validity of legislative ceedings. The responsibility for constitu nal improprieties is vested in the speak chairman, of the Assembly and Counci pectively.

Rationale: Justice Sathia Dev said the petition had raised far-reaching cons tional questions which transcended the oom

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ronically, his charming tale of the hare and the tortoise seems to reflect present state of our transportation today.

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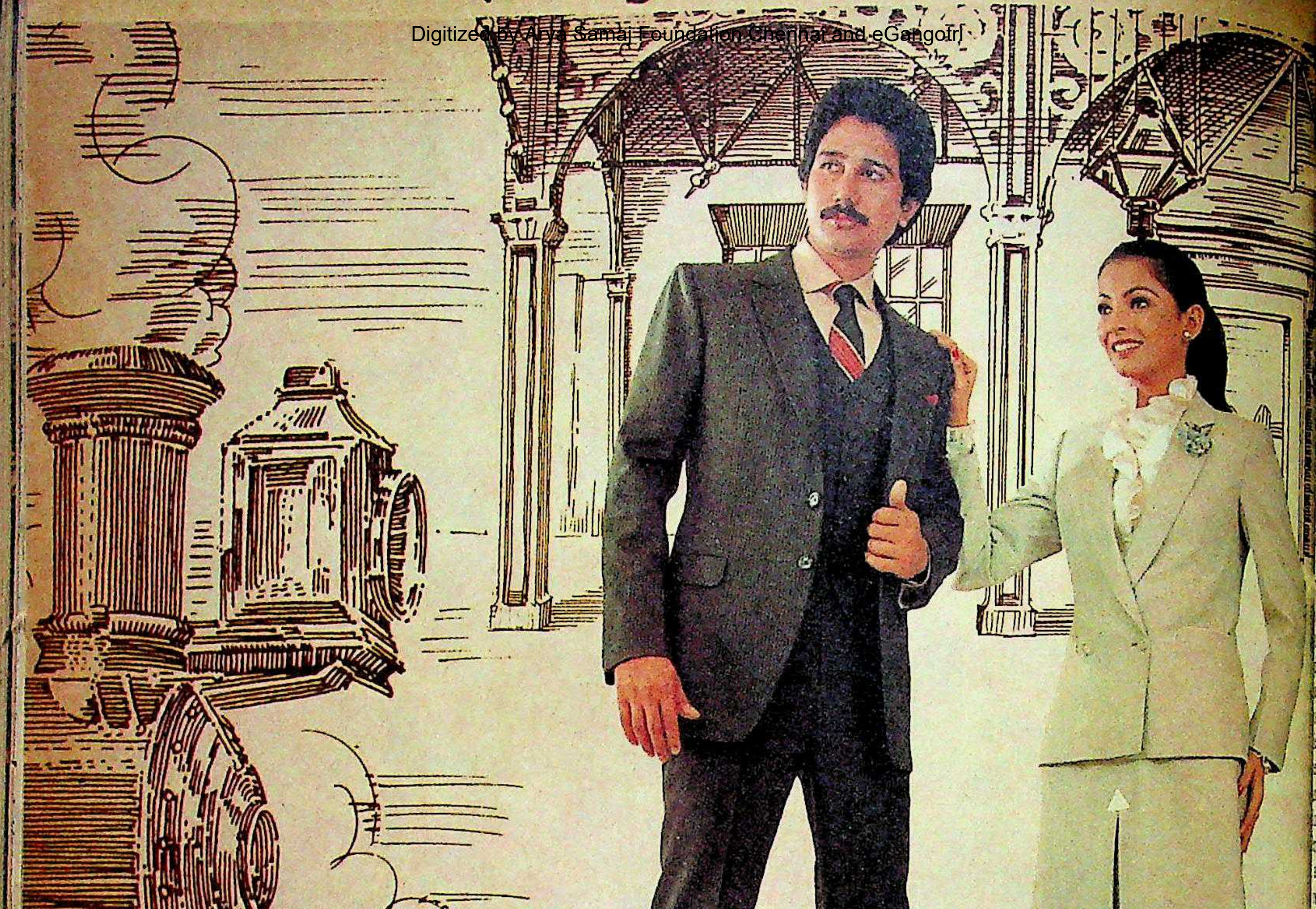

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any article specifying the relative ion of different limbs of the Govern- d he: "If constitutional function- to prevent or punish transgressions Constitution or anti-constitutional in legislatures and do not take action due to expediencies, should ction as ineffective institutions?" hasising the justiciability of such he asked: "Was Article 211 to for its enforcement and survival on and fancies of varying types of in different legislatures and be without consequences?" However, of the constitutional and public in- es involved, he dismissed Veera- ceeding petition, which seeks to MGR from functioning as chief mi- the disposal of the first one.

petition has created a furore in legal Said senior advocate V.K. Thiru- Chari: "Justice Dev has not done thing in entertaining this petition it lacks even prima facie validity. uming, though not admitting, that minister made anti-constitutional s in the Assembly . . . the Constitu- specific provisions detailing precise s under which a legislator may be d to have forfeited or vacated his and making anti-constitutional state- speeches is not one of them." He "Even an ordinary citizen has the criticise a judgement, without of tributing motives to the judge. So the privileges of a legislator be in less than the rights of a citizen?"

mate: Meanwhile, the Speaker of Nadu Legislative Assembly, K. has directed MGR not to contest 's writ petition. Giving his ruling ue at the request of the chief minis- lf, Rajaram observed: "The chief speech, as far as I am concerned, contravene Article 211. Even if it against the Constitution to initiate gainst him in a court. That will to infringing the privileges of the d will become liable to the charge of contempt for the house."

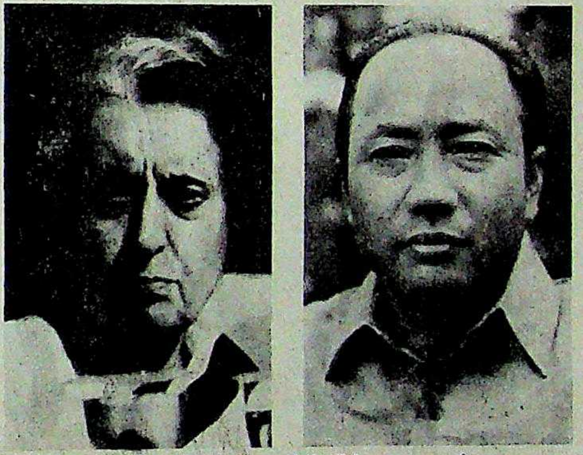
aram has reminded the courts that ent based on the legislator's oath to the Constitution cuts both ways. "Just as the ministers took oath to the Constitution, so too did the jud- courts should uphold the rights of lature, guaranteed under Article ference to the oath the judges had d summarily dismiss a petition at sion stage itself, if it were brought tice of the court that the cause of the petition arose from the procee- the legislature." The deadlock is plete and the verdict is certain to al history. —S.H. VENKATRAMANI

ASSAM

Simmering Tension

THE BANKS of the Brahmaputra echoed yet again to the by now familiar drone of Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi scoured the bloodied Assam country side. As she flew back, three days later, nothing had changed. Soon after the prime minister's visit, as if on cue, over nine persons were killed and 15 injured on April 3 when the police fired at an armed mob marching toward a refugee camp. Two days later, in a period of 24 hours, large scale violence left 13 dead in Goalpara district. Like a cancer, the violence continues to spread, taking lives and burning down villages.

Perhaps the only concrete result of Mrs Gandhi's visit was that Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia expanded his Cabinet from 13 to 30, the largest ever to function in Assam. If the visit was a non-event, it was because she still seemed to be groping for a strategy to undo what is now widely regarded as one of the greatest blunders of her political career. Even as Mrs Gandhi hopped from village to village, sporadic violence continued. Just as she took off from Abhayapuri in Goalpara district for Gauhati on the evening of March 30, a powerful bomb ripped through the busy marketplace of a small township near Gauhati. The bomb that killed 23 is said to have been actually synchronised with the prime minister's landing at the Jawaharnagar helipad on the outskirts of Dispur.



Mrs Gandhi (left) and Saikia: no reprieve

But the helipad itself saw an explosion of a different kind, one which sent much stronger shock waves in state government circles. As her helicopter hovered over the helipad preparing to land, the prime minister began counting something, her brows creased. She stepped out and immediately made for the rows of VIP and police escort cars parked close by. A fuming Mrs Gandhi counted more than 60 cars. "What is everyone doing here? Don't they do any work?" She shouted as top officials and Saikia's cabinet colleagues cringed, afraid that the state Government would withdraw their escort.

Tight Security: Dispur had not seen stricter security arrangements before. Not even the newsmen were allowed near the guest-house. Only a loudspeaker periodically announced the names of groups who were, in turn, allowed to see Mrs Gandhi after a strict security check. Congress (I) legislators had to submit to the humiliation of a roadside roll call by police officers. The Assembly Speaker, Sheikh Chand Mohammed was held up for over 15 minutes at the police barricade for want of a security pass.

The security mania continued all along as the prime minister visited the sites of some of the lesser known massacres as well as Pomilagaon, the only Assamese camp she has visited so far. While agitators did not actively try to thwart Mrs Gandhi's visit as they had done in the past, neither did many Assamese come out to receive her. A traditional 'gamocha' welcome was arranged by Ratna Sarma, an ex-serviceman, who was later boycotted by his village.

Meanwhile the most dangerous aspect of the Assam situation is what seems to be a deliberate attempt to keep the population split along communal lines. In the name of providing succour to the victims of the recent carnage that engulfed the entire Brahmaputra valley, both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Jamaat-i-Islami have been engaged in action that can only threaten Hindu-Muslim amity. While the BJP along with the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad issued a pamphlet in Gauhati appealing for donations for Hindu victims of the riots, the Jamaat-i-Islami has been distributing literature in the camps housing Muslim victims, telling them what Islam is all about.

These developments have met with strong disapproval from the leaders of All Assam Students Union (AASU) particularly because they see in the growing involvement of the BJP, a challenge to their own authority. The AASU has found, to its dismay, that the BJP has been trying to use the success of the poll boycott campaign as a springboard to plunge into the state's political scene. During the last three years, AASU has been able to successfully turn all established political parties into varying degrees of irrelevancy, and having done that, its leaders like Prafulla Mahanta and Bhrigu Phukan are in no mood to allow another political party to establish itself in the state, especially by capitalising on their slogans.

Discord: In an attempt to reaffirm the authority of the central leadership, Mahanta and Phukan, last fortnight, called for a suspension of the agitation and deprived the local units of their decision-making powers. Violence however continued unabated which just pointed out how far things had been allowed to go and how out of control the central leadership was. As an observer of the Assam scene said: "Having initially sparked off the violence by appealing to the people to resist elections, if need be at the cost of their lives, the AASU leadership has now lost the moral right to call it a day."

As for negotiations, AASU's Bhrigu Phukan was quite clear. Said he: "There is no question of our talking to the state Government. Non-cooperation will continue once the period of postponement is over. We want relief to be better. We also want to ensure there is no further violence. A lot of politicians have been charging us with violence and even P. C. Sethi said so in Parliament. He will prove to be wrong." The agitation leaders were quick to seize the opportunity offered by their unilateral truce as they toured the countryside, trying to win back the plains tribals and the tea garden labour, the two other major 'indigenous' groups in Assam besides the ethnic Assamese.

The current incidents of violence are clearly the work of extremists of other organisations and their supporters within the AASU but there is little that the central leaders can do about it. Neither does the state Government seem, in any way, better equipped to deal with the situation. The Saikia Ministry is yet to find its feet, floundering as it is because of the Congress's unstable political base in the state.

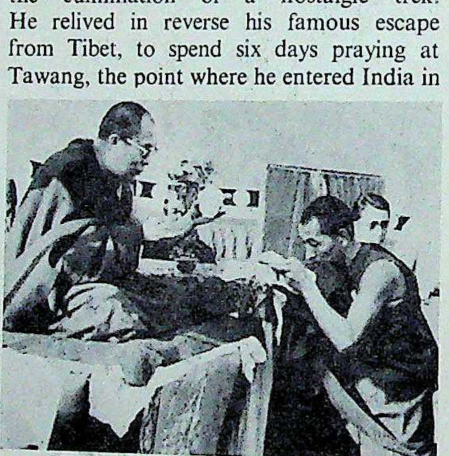
Congress leaders, having at different points of time, aligned themselves with the agitationists, particularly at times of attack against the leftists, are also finding it difficult to clear the mess at a political level. Administratively, as well, it is no secret that the majority of the constabulary are sympathetic to the agitationists and to a large extent, unhelpful to the Central Reserve Police. Consequently the drift and violence continues with nobody certain of when and where it will all end.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Journey Into The Past

THE HIMALAYAN wonderland along the Kameng Valley in Arunachal Pradesh has never been so decked up. Penants and prayer flags flutter in the stiff mountain breeze. Almost every curve on the road after the army cantonment in Tenga Valley is decorated with welcome arches and banners. In the 400-year-old Tawang Monastery, barely 20 km from the borders of his lost kingdom, Tibet, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is deeply engrossed in prayer.

For one regarded as the temporal and spiritual head of the 6 million Tibetans it was the culmination of a nostalgic trek. He relived in reverse his famous escape from Tibet, to spend six days praying at Tawang, the point where he entered India in 1959. Before beginning the return journey that will take him to Itanagar he has to perform a 12-day Kalachakra initiation, the most elaborate of the Buddhist tantrik ceremonies, at Dirang Dozong, the deep depression midway between Sela and Bomdila.



The Dalai Lama blesses a priest: spiritual leadership

Excited Reaction: For roughly 2 lakh Buddhists in Arunachal Pradesh it was their first chance of seeing their living god. Said a police officer at Bomdila: "I have never seen them so excited and in such a deeply spiritual mood. There has virtually been no crime since he arrived." Most tribes in east and west Kameng districts—Monpas, Akas, and Sherdukpens—are followers of Mahayana Buddhism. In the small Bomdila market business has almost come to a standstill with the local population thronging towards Tenzing Gaon or Dirang where a gathering of 30,000 is expected for the Kalachakra initiation.

A steep four-hour climb along the shale and gravel patch across the Kameng River and Rupa Valley ends at Tenzing Gaon, a prosperous Tibetan refugee settlement close to Bhutan. The Dalai Lama st here for 12 days at the new monastery tha inaugurated. Over 10,000 devotees turne for his three public discourses—over ha them had trekked across from Bhutan. settlement which had never seen electr twinkled at night with seven diesel gen installed by the Arunachal Governmen water supply system was laid overnight a huge force of officials became part o holy entourage. Said an official: The D Lama is a valued state guest."

But while the Dalai Lama's follo and the Indian Government officials insi that it was a purely "spiritual" visit it little to scotch speculation in diplomatic cles. The Chinese made no secret that looked unkindly on the visit which took t *bête noire* of three decades within 20 k their borders across a part of India. L commenting on the visit, a Chinese For Office spokesman told a foreign news ag in Beijing that his country regarded "grave provocation." Says the Dalai L with a flash of contempt: "My every mo ment is a provocation for them."

Despite his aggressive stance ther little doubt that the Dalai Lama has over last few years indications of softening. T delegations of his representatives, the last led by his younger sister Prema Gyalpo h visited China. He himself hopes to visit T in 1985 and carefully refrains from talkin terms of free Tibet. About his Aruna visit he says: "Then people of Aruna have been requesting me to come fo long time."

Important Rite: While it may not h affected the Dalai Lama's spiritual pur the inevitable political guesswork has se to take attention off the grand finale of journey—the Kalachakra initiation. K chakra (The Wheel of Time) is tantrik ini tion aimed at quick enlightenment. S Thuptin Janyang, 68, who will be the Ch pen (master of ceremonies) at the initiatio "There will be special prayers for five d followed by the seven stages of initia during which the devotees will visualise Kalachakra Deity." This is the sev successive Kalachakra initiation perfor by the present Dalai Lama. In the pas Dalai Lama has performed more than in his lifetime. The last Kalachakra at Madison Square.

Many people are said to be plannin sneak across the border from Tibet. incentive is that they can take part in ceremony and get a glimpse of the ex God-king.

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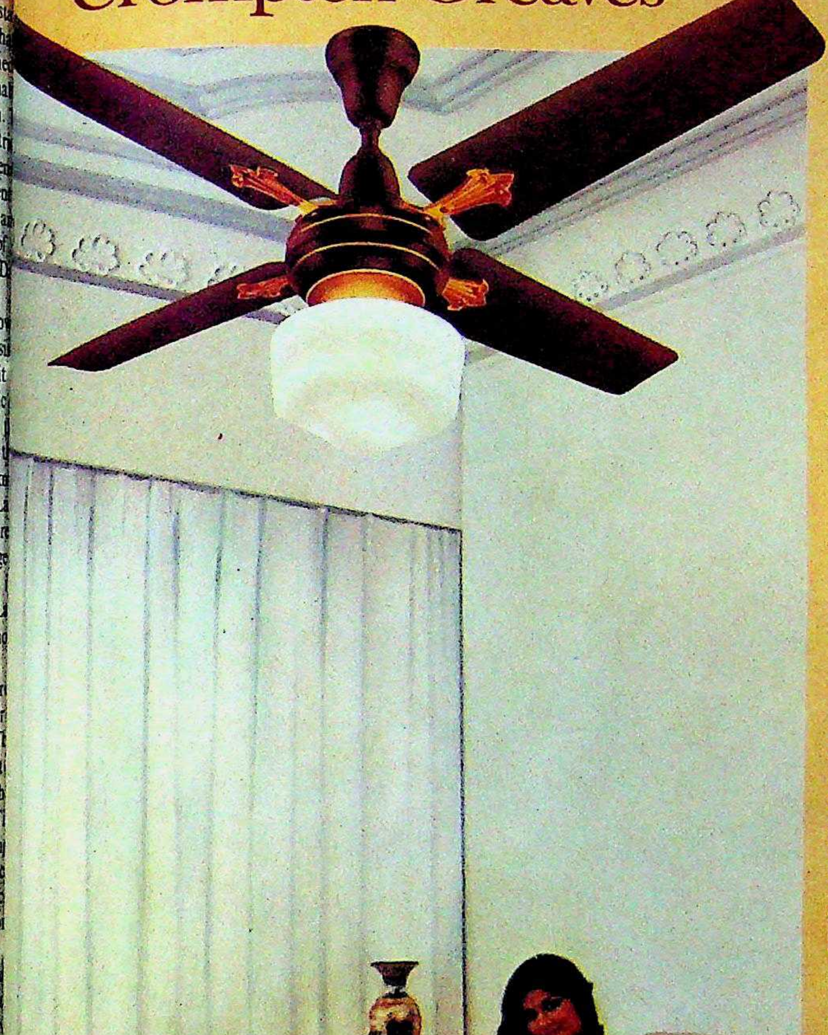

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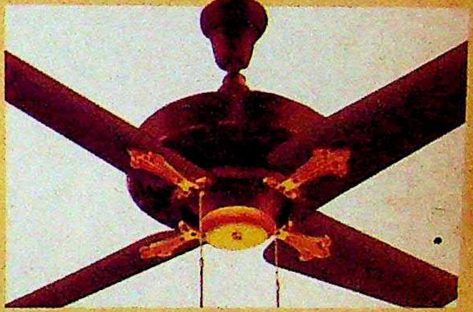

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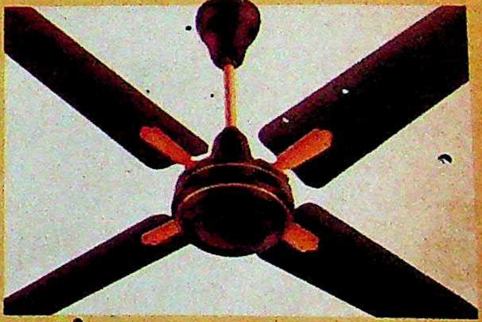

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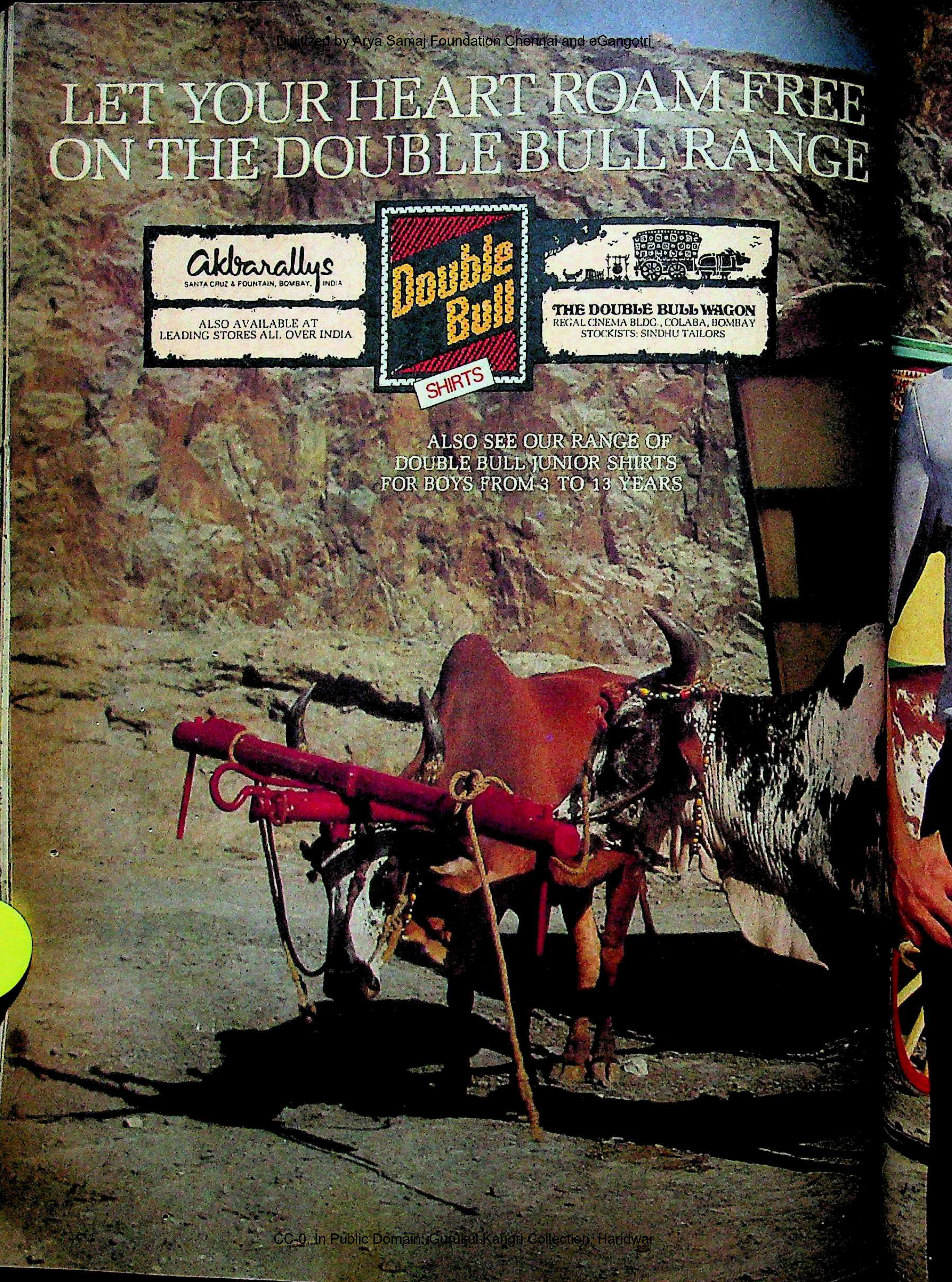
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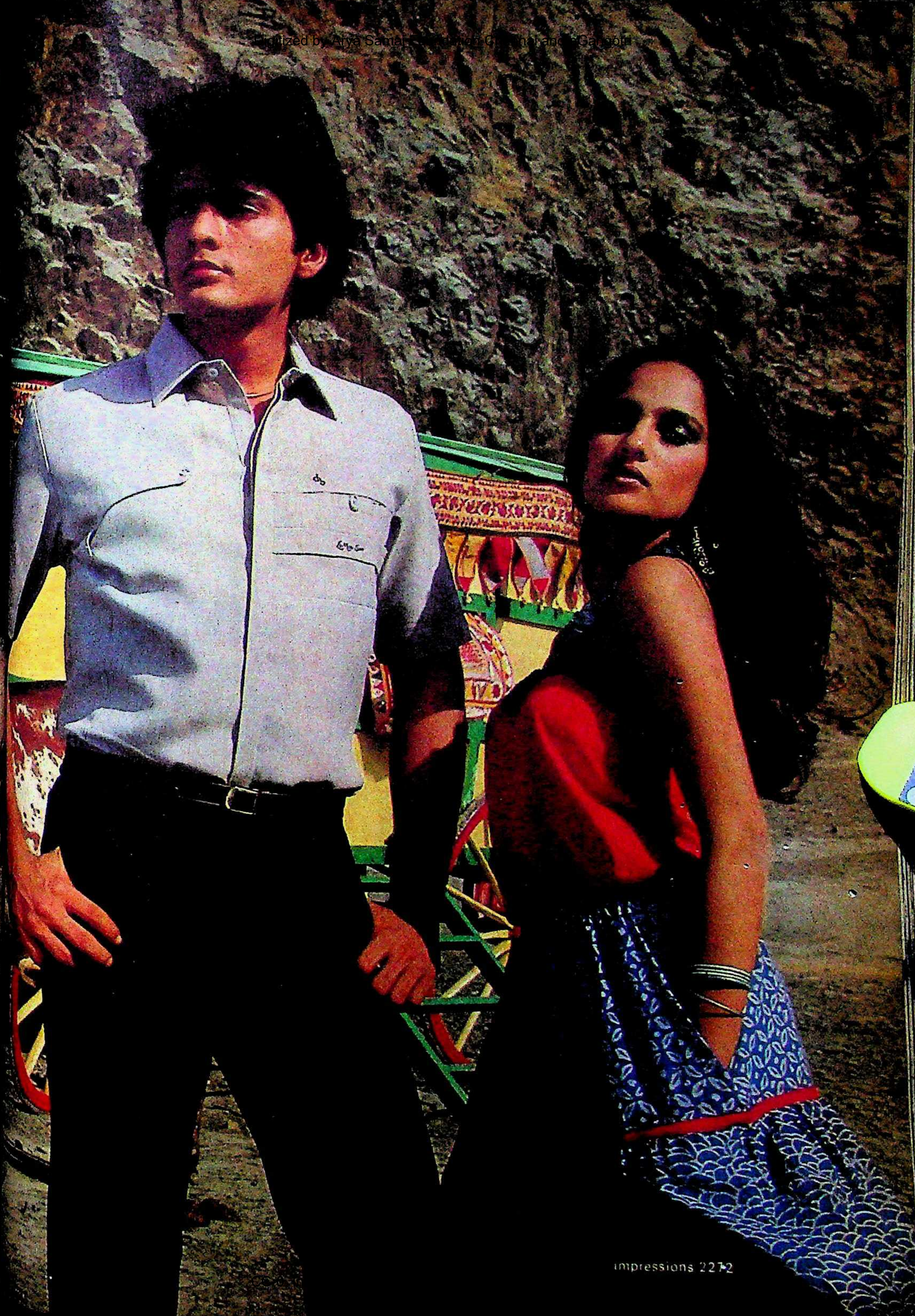

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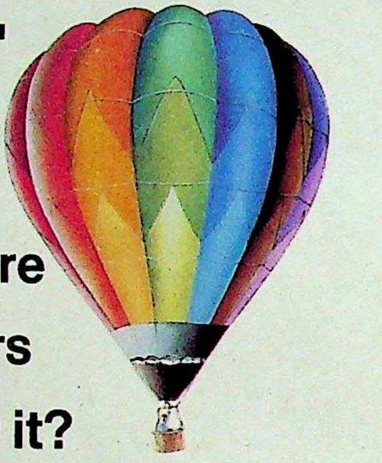

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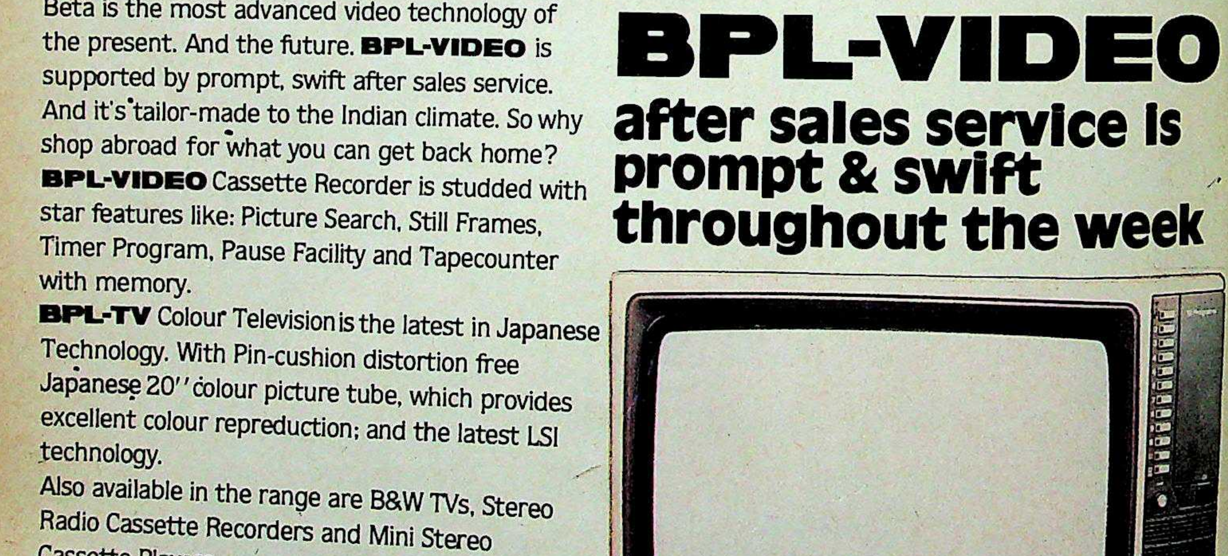

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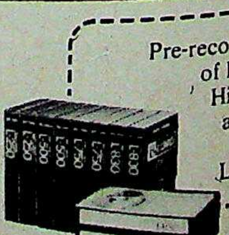

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Chief Minister Sangma: musical chairs

WHEN the Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP) ministry led by the redoubtable Brington Buhai Lyngdoh was voted out of power on March 31, after a preca- day existence, there was a sense w about it as there was to the g in of the Meghalaya Democr- nt (MDF), yet another coalition led Congress(I)'s Captain Williamson two days later. The events that pe so rapidly also underscored that politics in this state continue to matic as its people. As a bureaucrat marked: "It is a fascinating mix of al sense of ethics and the mac- n."

cks in the three-party coalition were from the word go, as the MUPP, B. h's brainchild, came into being after s of often acrimonious bargaining the partners, B. Lyngdoh's All Par- Leaders Conference (APHLC), stone Lyngdoh's Hill State People's atic Party (HSPDP) and the miniscule Demands Implementation Conven- c) led by maverick politician Martin n Majaw who, in any case, failed to o the Assembly this time. The two s agreed to "share power" in the Meghalayan way on a two-and-a- r basis with the APHLC leader getting t term.

pical Concoction: But with disgrunt- nts among both the major coalition and internecine feuds in the HSPDP not to be a repeat of a similar experi- the last session when Sangma and B. h shared power under a three-flag ent which included the Congress(I) the APHLC and HSPDP. The new Government is yet another typically yan concoction with 25 Congress(I) rs, four dissidents of the HSPDP, one the APHLC and the PDIC and the lone dent in the 60-member house. Unbe- , the APHLC and HSPDP dissidents ted their own government out of continue to be members of their respective parties.

e writing on the wall was clear as the alition faced its first challenge in the ly barely three weeks after its forma- candidates for the speaker's post, E. g got three votes less than its of 34. Later it was rudely jolted e Congress(I)-sponsored Ira Marak ted deputy speaker by a majority of one. But the tactician in Lyngdoh was still optimistic as he half-jokingly invited the Congress(I) to join the coalition. "We have ruled together in the past. We can do it again," he said.

But the Congress(I) had better ideas. The deputy leader of the Opposition D.D. Lapang moved a censure motion. Three legislators, HSPDP General Secretary Rowell Lyngdoh, his partyman Indro Pariat, and the PDIC's Medistar Warbah, walked out of the coalition leaving it with a majority of one. The APHLC's Mackenson Sangma and independent Edwison Bareh also walked into the ayes gallery to seal the MUPP coalition's fate. The PDIC's betrayal, too, was complete as its second legislator, Printing and Stationery Minister Doblin Nongkynrih abstained. The five defectors were sworn in along with Sangma and the independent, Bareh was given the prestigious post of chairman of the State Planning Board. The HSPDP's Gerson Lyngdoh defected later.

Toppling Logistics: While the defectors have thus been rewarded generously, it is widely acknowledged even by the losers that no money changed hands in the course of the toppling operation. The Congress(I) campaigners sat in the picturesque hotel, Pinewood Ashok, planning tactics and lavishly entertaining prospective defectors, but that was all. Confessed an APHLC legislator: "We fell under our own weight." Lapang said: "When a wolf takes away sheep from a flock do you blame the wolf or the shepherd?" B. Lyngdoh commented ruefully: "People let us down because of personal grievances. You cannot satisfy everybody." Sangma, who had earlier resisted pressure from the party high command to buy MLA's firmly pleaded: "The instability in the coalition was not of my creating." In retrospect, however, he proved a better judge of the state's politics than the two Lyngdohs.

The shrewd Sangma does not have to face an assembly session immediately and has at least three months to consolidate. A majority of two has no meaning in Meghalaya and thus, even as Sangma flew to Delhi to give the progress report to the high command, his minions began wooing more legislators from the APHLC-HSPDP brood. Sangma is obviously trying to exploit further the rift within the HSPDP that initiated the coalition's collapse.

HSPDP President Hopingstone Lyngdoh has the reputation of being an honest albeit stubborn man. Said an HSPDP legislator: "Leaders like Dr Barrister Pakem and Winstone Syiemiong (former ministers) hate his guts. Syiemiong was also upset at having been denied the public health engineering portfolio. Let us see how far their group will go now to spite 'Bah' (brother) Hoping." Simultaneously an 'operation seduction' has also been launched among the APHLC legislators. The fact of life in Meghalaya is that the party affiliations are still too amorphous to transcend barriers of tribal and personal loyalties.

HARYANA

Forest Furore

IT IS an audacious measure that has invited the ire of politicians both within and without the ruling party. Last fortnight, however, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, the doughty trader-turned-politician adroitly converted the six-month-old ordinance creating the Haryana Forest Development Board (HFDB) into a bill for consideration in the state Assembly.

The ordinance was promulgated by a compliant Governor G.D. Tapase last November, despite a dissenting Revenue and Forest Minister Phool Chand. The HFDB's chairmanship was assumed by Devender Sharma, a close associate of the chief minister and a Congress(I) nominee defeated in the May elections last year. Sharma has since been determinedly exploiting the all-pervasive provisions of the ordinance. Despite Lal's earlier assurances that the board would confine itself to logging operations and commercial exploitation of forests, by mid-December the HFDB had usurped the functions of the state Forest Department by virtually taking possession of all territorial divisions spreading over 1.68 lakh hectares. The only exception was social forestry which is funded by the World Bank and was therefore left in charge of the truncated Forest Department.

Criticism has been sharp and all-erva-

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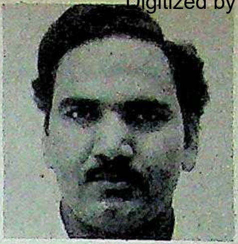
a petition to Haryana urt, B.D. Monga and Indian Forest Service ers have argued that ion of the HFDB violates an Forest Act (IFA), e Wildlife Protection) 1972, the All India Act (AISA) 1951, as well orest Conservation Act onga points out that the e violates the Constitu- ncroaching on the subject of these hout even seeking prior instructions President which are mandatory in atters. Several implications follow. ere are no 'government' forests, their n having been transferred to a sepa- l entity, the HFDB, they also cease to ved or protected areas. Further, the vernment will be powerless not only ing rights to village communities in forests but also in monitoring offen- mitted in various categories of fo- ally, state and Central forest service who cannot be legally converted employees of a mere board, will have s to perform.



Sharma: determined to stay

curring with the charges of the IFS the Union Agriculture Ministry by Lal's political rival, Rao Birendra has also adopted a disapproving Chastising the state Government which appeared to be violative of the s of the Constitution", the ministry patched three letters seeking amend-

e Centre has taken serious objection g all officers and employees of the forest officers, with quasi-judicial ar in excess of those granted by the s also upheld the argument of the IFS that their deputation to the board xcess of the prescribed deputation

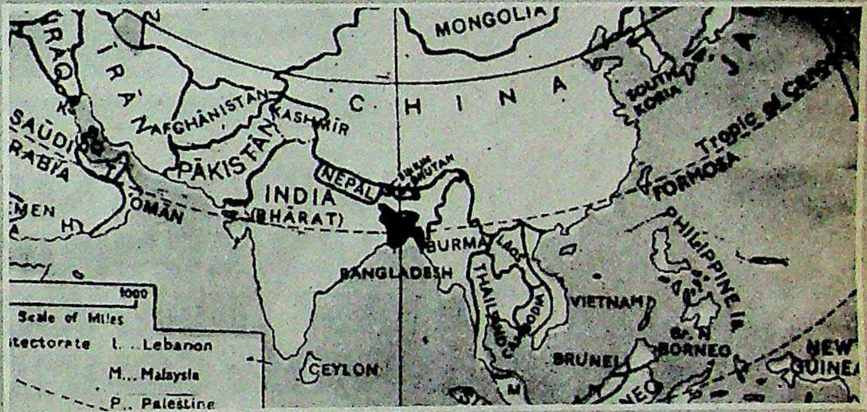
ther, it has found that the state ment's contention that there is no of ownership but only of manage- forests is not clearly spelt out in the ce. Said M.V. Kesavan, deputy secre- nion Agriculture Ministry: "The r the use and management in Sec- of the ordinance seem to denote only pose of such transfer and not the sub- ter of the transfer. The limits of the have not been indicated."

king up cudgels last fortnight, the ion has also jumped into the fray. d by protesting Lok Dal, Janata d Bharatiya Janata Party members Assembly, Lal was obliged to admit three letters from the Centre, even he resolutely withheld the details. Lok Dal MLA Sahib Singh Saini: are in the concurrent list and the state cannot pass a bill where there is already a specific law passed by the Parliament—the Indian Forest Act." Added Chandra Wati, Lok Dal MLA and leader of the Opposition: "Today we have a forest selling board and tomorrow we shall have a police board to manage law and order."

Not to be outdone, however, Lal has continued to contend that the state Government was within its powers to create the board. An official statement asserts that "an alternative and effective agency is in conformity with the new national policy. The state plans to make a very ambitious effort for the development of forests. Experience has shown that the present administrative arrangement needed drastic change. Hence the board." Already, most of the budget of the Forest Department, whose total revenue is around Rs 4 crore, has been transferred to the HFDB.

However, reports from foresters alleging large-scale plunder of kikar trees and their replacement by eucalyptus have begun piling up. Said Gurnam Singh, Haryana's chief conservator of forests: "The menace of planting one species will be harmful to the general ecological conditions."

Meanwhile, in Urjini village of Ambala district protesting farmers demanding the traditional share of 35 per cent in eucalyptus worth Rs 10 lakh which the HFDB is selling to two paper mills have met police repression. Lok Dal MLA Roshan Lal Arya, who represents the area, is threatening to fast unto death if the deforestation is not immediately stopped. Nevertheless, HFDB Chairman Sharma stoutly denies the claims and asserts that "this forest entirely belongs to us and panchayats have no rights. It is our first test and we do not want to fail". How far they will succeed will depend entirely on the high court's verdict. —GOBIND THUKRAI.



The offending map: flagrant violation

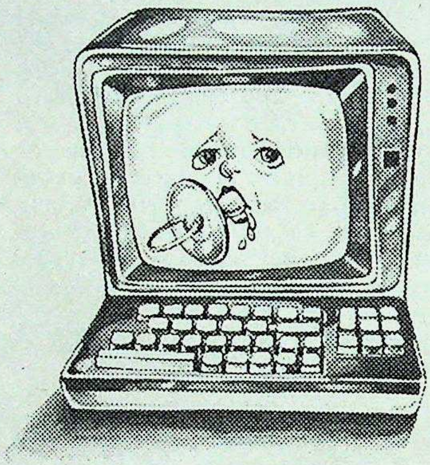
DIPLOMACY

Border Bother

FIRST Pakistan, then China and now Bangladesh. Every now and then, the Government of India writes stiff notes to its neighbours about maps that show parts of India not as parts of India. Last fortnight, it was the turn of the Bangladesh envoy to be told of the Government's annoyance at another such map. It is called the map of Bangladesh and carries an inset at the top showing 'Bangladesh and surrounding countries'. Unfortunately, Jammu & Kashmir has been marked off with a dotted line and is called 'Kashmir'. Sikkim, the 22nd state of the Indian Union, is shown as a separate country marked off by the thick outline used to demarcate international borders.

What is curious is that the map, priced at taka 10 (Rs 4), and printed at the Survey of Bangladesh offices in Dhaka, is the second edition of the map that had been originally produced in 1972 when Bangladesh was born. The second edition started printing two years ago. Delhi took note last fortnight after a news agency report from Agartala.

Mindful of the hullabaloo over the New Moore Island episode nearly two years ago, the Indian protest against this cartographic violation of the country's borders has been deliberately low-key. A verbal protest was made to Bangladesh High Commissioner Abdul Karim Khondakar who promised to get back to the External Affairs Ministry after he had obtained fuller details from Dhaka. Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jhakar did not allow opposition members to raise the issue in the house. This is one border issue that is evidently not going to develop into a skirmish. —SUMANTA SEN



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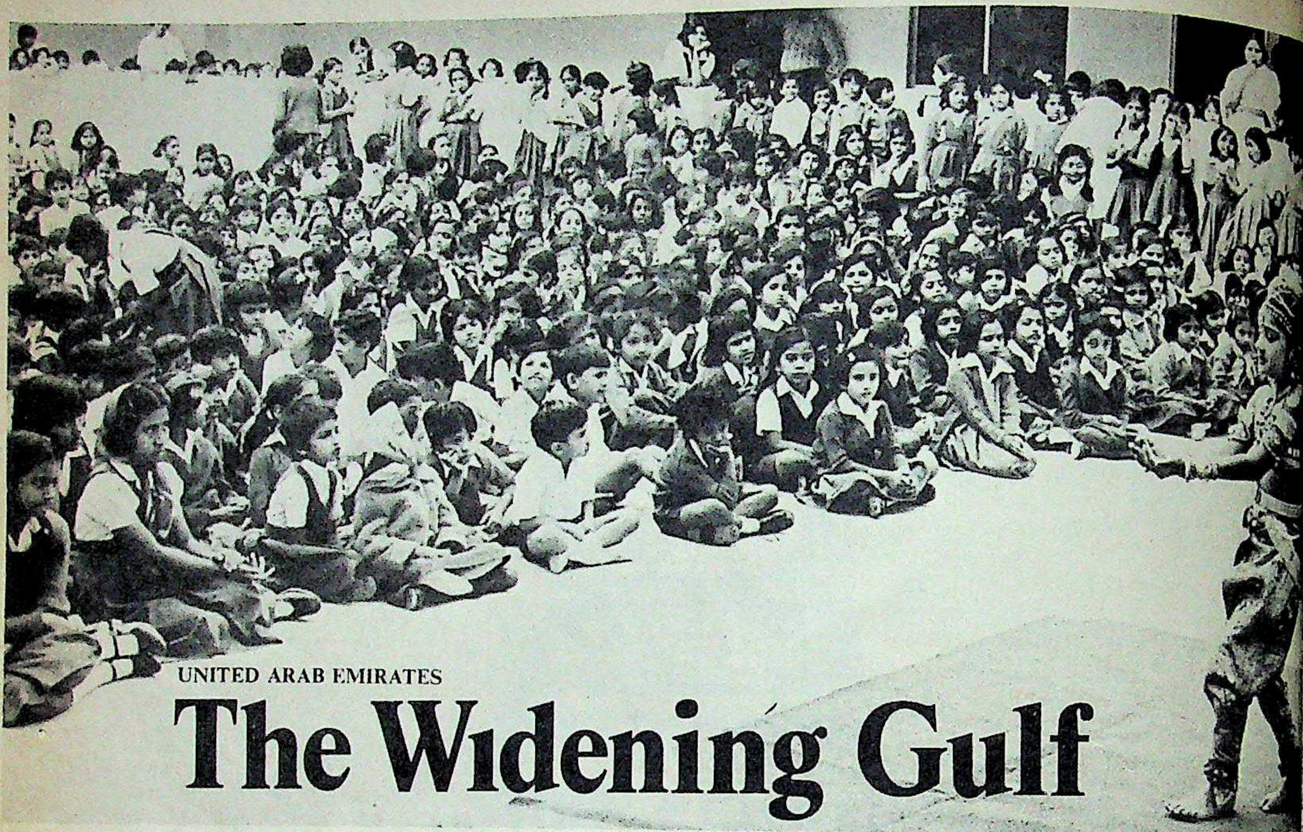


UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Widening Gulf

Indian schoolchildren in Dubai: convenient scapegoats

THE RISING tide of anti-Asian feeling in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has brought its guns to bear on Indian organisations in the country. Unable to either reduce the number of Asians or proportionately increase the number of Arabs, authorities in the UAE have embarked on a policy of making life as difficult for them as possible in the hope that many of them will ultimately pack up and go home on their own.

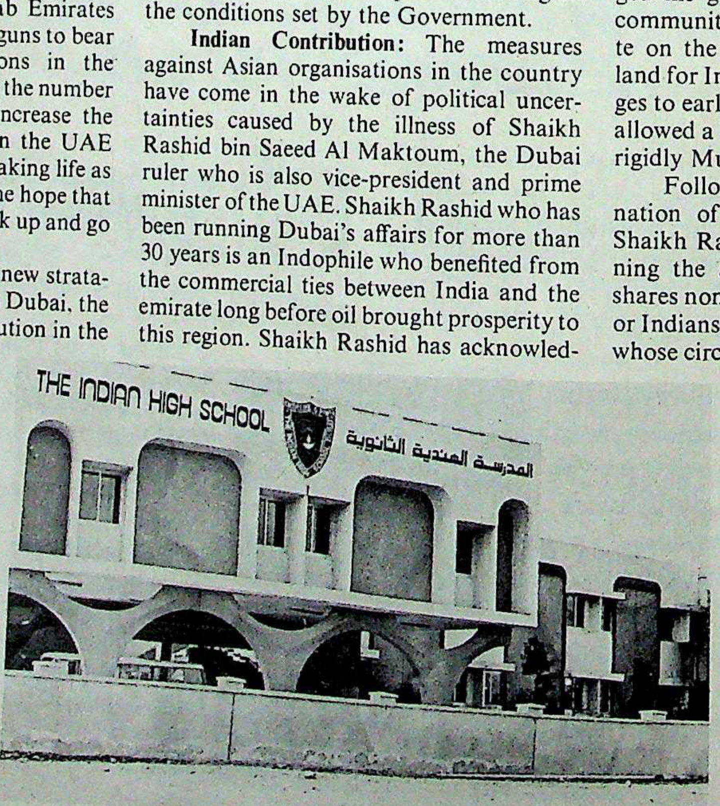
At the receiving end of this new stratagem is the Indian High School in Dubai, the largest private educational institution in the Gulf, which has been subject to a series of measures aimed at crippling it. Two other Indian-owned private schools have also been asked to cope with impossible conditions or face closure in the next academic year.

Dubai's Indian Ladies' Association, a very active social group of Indian housewives, has been told to nominate 20 UAE nationals on its executive committee or cease all public activities and its standing as a legal body. The Indian Merchants' Community in Dubai, whose activities were banned some time ago, has been unable to get itself registered in spite of fulfilling all the conditions set by the Government.

Indian Contribution: The measures against Asian organisations in the country have come in the wake of political uncertainties caused by the illness of Shaikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the Dubai ruler who is also vice-president and prime minister of the UAE. Shaikh Rashid who has been running Dubai's affairs for more than 30 years is an Indophile who benefited from the commercial ties between India and the emirate long before oil brought prosperity to this region. Shaikh Rashid has acknowledged his gratitude to Dubai's early Ind community of merchants who put the em te on the world trading map by dona land for Indian schools and allowing pri ges to early Indian immigrants. He has allowed a Hindu temple, the only one in rigidly Muslim region.

Following his illness, said to be a com nation of old age and kidney proble Shaikh Rashid's three sons have been ning the affairs of state. The triumvi shares none of the father's warmth for In or Indians. Crown Prince Shaikh Makto whose circle of friends is made up large young Arab nationalists. vours closer ties with o Arab countries. Defence Mi ter Shaikh Mohammed known for his decided til wards the West. Finance Industry Minister Sh Hamdan is on record as wa ing to reduce the number Asians in the UAE.

The attitude of the so in line with the federal gov ment's policy of increas UAE's Arab population at cost of Asian expatriates. goal has proved elusive de a number of regulations ma immigration difficult for n



The Indian High School in Dubai: target for discrimination desperation, last year the authori- several hundred people with valid papers in a bid to terrorise Asians DAY, April 15, 1982), but even this ave the desired effect. The dilemma overnment has been that not only demand for Asians exist, but em- ave also been unwilling to hire more and provently less hard-working onals.

grant Population: Ahmed Al Ju- der-secretary of the Ministry of nd Social Affairs, says that unless ration trend is reversed, only 12 f UAE's estimated population of 2 n 1985 will be nationals. By 1990, rtion will fall to 9 per cent and by 2000, to 2.5 per cent. Jumairi, who t Arab labour is less of a security l "hazard", says the Government is greements with Arab countries to bour and thus control Asian immi-

new policy of creating problems for rganisations was initially tried in the e Indian High School when it was separate its pre-primary section, g about 1,000 students, from the e school last year. The argument put by the authorities was that congre- f 4,800 foreign students in one place y was a potential security threat for rnment. For the community school d just undergone an upheaval follo- e mandatory sexual segregation of imposed by the Education Mini- presented a major crisis. This was, overcome by building a wall across l premises separating the pre-pri- tion from the main body of the

the school has been told that sepa- a wall will not be enough for the cademic year. According to Auda- sy, chief inspector of schools in the n Ministry, the school is required to t new buildings and provide other n a separate area for the kindergar- n. He concedes that this need not, entail the creation of a separate ent or disaffiliation from the main

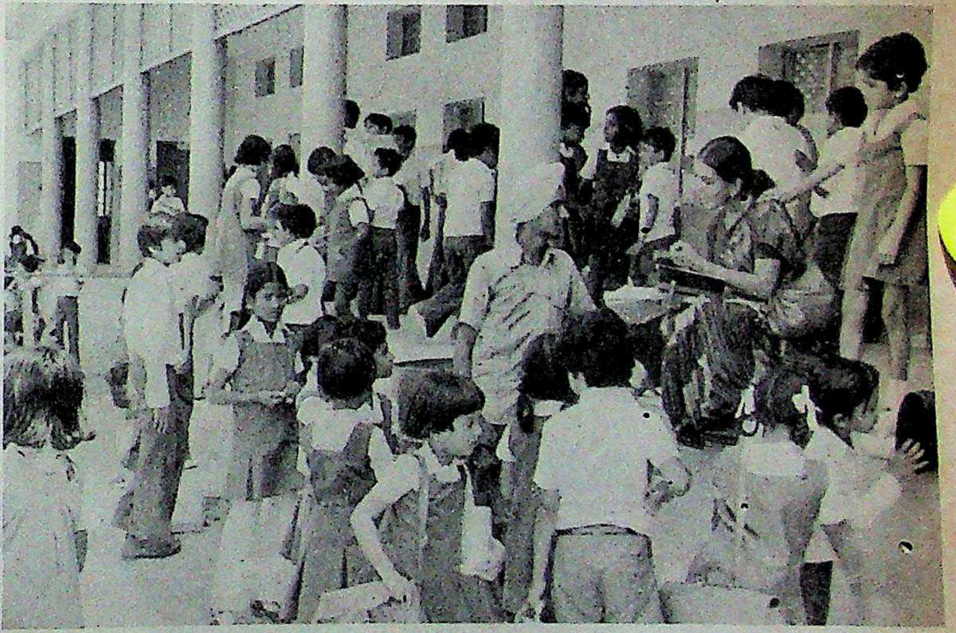
easonable Orders: But what is worse school has been told that it cannot w students to any class in the next year. Even vacancies caused by the of students cannot be filled up. An has, however, been made in the kindergarten. Says Principal Moti "The Government has already the opening of new private schools igners. Where will the Indian go if the ban on new admissions is ?" The blow has come at a time school, one of the oldest private educational institutions in the area, is on the threshold of a big expansion. Its new building costing almost 4 million dirhams (Rs 1.4 crore) will be ready for occupation next month. "We will be able to use the new building even if there are no new admissions," says the principal. "We will shift some of the classes now held in makeshift sheds to the new building."

The school has also been told to appoint a Muslim as assistant headmaster either by sacking the non-Muslim incumbent or by creating a new post. Last year, the school was told to increase the proportion of its Muslim teachers to 23 per cent in order to match the strength of its Muslim students. The management readily complied with the request and when enough Muslim teachers could not be found, the ministry was asked to recruit personnel on its behalf.

However, this time, the mood at a school board meeting which discussed the issue was one of defiance. Said an enraged member of the governing body: "It has been our experience that the more we give in, the more we are being pressured. Other schools get away with anything. They openly flout even regulations on segregation. One Western school recently went to the extent of serving alcohol at a school function in spite of the rigid Islamic laws on prohibition. This time we will not give in. Let them close the school if they want to."

In the case of the nursery-cum-primary school, the ministry discovered after eight years that the two-storey building housing the school and the playground opposite were too small. Also officials who have been inspecting the school almost every month suddenly decided that the manner in which the school records were kept was not up to the ministry's specifications. With the full knowledge that visas for additional school staff were difficult to procure, the ministry asked the school to hire more teachers to "lighten the burden of existing staff" as well as nannies and cleaners.

A letter from Rashid Abdulla Taha, under-secretary for education, to the school's owner warned that the institution's licence would not be renewed in the next academic year unless these conditions were fulfilled. Said the frustrated owner: "This is nothing but harassment. The authorities would never say this to schools run by Westerners. In any case, I already have nannies and cleaners to do the necessary work." All the same, she approached the authorities for visas to bring in more staff and was promptly told that visas were the concern of the Labour Ministry. Said an official of the Education Ministry: "If the Labour Ministry is unwilling to issue visas, we are helpless. We would not like to interfere."



The Dubai school before the segregation law was enforced

IN THE case of Our Own English School, owned by an Indian woman whose early students include several UAE nationals in top positions today, the ministry objected to instruction being given for three different examinations at the same time. The school which originally coached students only for the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) examinations recently introduced classes also for the British 'O' level and Pakistan's secondary education systems. An angry Taha gave the school one week to choose one course and drop the other two.

Following representations from parents and others, the ministry however gave the school a reprieve on "compassionate grounds".

For Our Own English School, the troubles are by no means over. A directive from the ministry that it must have separate premises if it wants to continue the three courses in the next academic year still stands. Further, the ministry has taken objection to things such as a few double promotions and the admission of two students in "grades higher than their standards". In the most blatant case of interference in a local school's affairs to date, the ministry has warned that Our Own English School's management would be asked to terminate the services of its director if any such "irregularity" is detected in the school any more.

Meanwhile, Indian students in the UAE are already going without history courses following a ban on CBSE's two prescribed textbooks *Story Of Civilisation*—Vol 1 & 2. The ban was the result of including Darwin's theory of evolution and the history of Israel in these textbooks. Rev Fr Kunnunkal, CBSE chairman, during a recent visit to the UAE said that Indian students may have to go without history courses for two or three years, before new textbooks are prepared.

Dubai's Indian Ladies Association during happier times: pressure tactics

Banned Textbook: Kunnunkal said the controversial textbook was still being used in other Muslim countries in the Gulf such as Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and even fundamentalist Saudi Arabia despite the reference. "I personally do not see anything wrong with teaching Darwin's evolutionary theory. It is a scientific hypothesis and not a proven theory, but people are rather touchy about religion and history is a rather sensitive subject. We do not want to come in the way," he said.

Officials of the ministry maintain that they are not singling out Indian schools for reprimand and that the law is being applied to all. The ministry does issue routine letters to Western schools but most of these ignore the instructions and unlike in the case of Indian schools, there has not been a single case where a Western school has been penalised for failure to comply with the ministry's instructions. An American and two European schools have even defied instructions on mandatory sexual segregation. Another school run by Christian missionaries, which also practises segregation only selectively, openly refuses to admit Muslim students and yet gets away with it.

Pakistani schools have also come under fire, but the Pakistan Embassy recently made representations to the Government demanding greater freedom in the running of these institutions. In his reply to the memorandum, Taha said Pakistani schools should give the lead in applying local regulations "due to the deep Islamic ties between the UAE and Pakistan."

Pressurised Organisations: For the Indian Ladies' Association, the fiat on the composition of its executive committee came from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Ministry officials who orally informed association office-bearers of this requirement at a meeting turned a deaf ear to protestations that the association may have to be closed down if such conditions have to be met. They were also unimpressed by the argument that the association's regulations permitted only a 10-member committee and that including 20 UAE nationals would make it unwieldy. Among other things the association periodically sends clothes to the Indian Red Cross and keeps Indian cultural traditions alive among the young by co ting classes in Bharat Natyam and cla music.

The mood among association mem last fortnight was in favour of closing the association and allowing the cu classes to continue as informal, private grammes. Confided an office-bearer of association: "We could easily get 20 U nationals or even more to serve on our c mittee, but we will not do it. Why shoul go on pandering to them?" Meanw associations run by European and Amer women continue to flourish.

For the 700-strong Indian Mercha Community, the problem has been its cess and influence which were out of pro tion to its strength. In its four year existence, the community emerged as a rallel chamber of commerce, often more fluential than the semi-official chamber city where Indians constitute the single gest group of businessmen. When Duba sinessmen were victims of a series of ship frauds some time ago, it was the Indian M chants' Community which rallied legal other forms of support for them. W Indian businessmen began fleeing Dubai year (INDIA TODAY, September 30, 1982 was senior members of the community liaised with banks and others involve order to minimise hardships and check trend of business closures. "The orga tion served to bridge the communication among traders and eliminate disputes," Vasu Shroff, member of the executive c mittee and one of Dubai's biggest te merchants.

Alarmed at the growing importan this organisation the authorities order cessation of its activities last year on ground that it had not been formally reg red with the civic body. Since then, the o nisation has been trying to get itself reg red, but to no avail. Meanwhile, in a reo nisation of its board of directors, the D Government has got rid of the In member on the board of the Dubai Cha of Commerce. Maghanmal Jethanand, only expatriate on the board, had serve that capacity for 10 years.

Dubai residents of Shaikh Rash generation recall that Indians had lived for decades without posing any "threat" contributed to the early prosperity of emirate. Few other foreign communit the Arab world have proved as trouble as Indians in the Gulf. Many of them r that these arguments carry little weight the younger generation overwhelmed b new wave of Arab nationalism. But by time the new rulers realise that they ca find foreigners as docile and trouble-fr Asians, it may be too late to protect Du social fabric.

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A PRADESH

rty Building Exercise

ANDHRA PRADESH Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao is rapidly discovering that nurturing a political party is a little like making the kind of epic movies that brought him fame. In the the first stage is finding a script and the idea to a financier. The next stage sing the leading cast and picking the after which the real job of actually the production commences. Rama Telugu Desam, having followed much e path, is now faced with picking its ing cast in the form of a membership and making its first production run, s Rama Rao is finding romises to be a slow and process. Says K.V. rayan, convener of the election steering com- "We are starting from We are making history hra Pradesh. For the first a long while elections village level units of a ratic political party are place."

e exercise is undoubted- que. In a reversal of political practice, it is fter winning an election rming a government that ugu Desam has started its party-buil- rocess from the lowest level. In that, will depend on the legislator or the andidate who lost in the January ass- elections. They have to enrol at least one-rupee members in constituencies the party won and 4,000 in other uencies.

rty Hierarchy: The lowest tier is the committee and significantly the next he constituency council so that legisla- d the villagers can be in direct contact. ird tier is the district l and in addition to the 23 tate the party has added ore—Vijayawada and khapatnam—urban dis- Above this is the state- council, which decides policies and strategies and at least once every quar- e top tier is the central de- conference which is to nce every two years and he party's state executi- was to meet on March 29 party's first anniversary but to make up for the delay it is likely to be on Rama Rao's birthday—May 28.

The constituency councils are still being formed and the district councils and executives are to be finalised only by the end of April. As with some other political parties the Telugu Desam is to follow the principle of one person one post, except in the case of Rama Rao who will be both chief minister and party president.

Conscious of the need for educating his partymen, Rama Rao is starting a school for future party politicians. The residential school is to come up on a six-acre campus on Hyderabad's Banjara Hills but will comprise of thatched huts with a few pieces of furniture as it is intended to be in the traditional and spartan 'gurukul' style. Four hundred workers from all over the state are to be taught political principles, public administration, democracy and parliamentary practices besides Telugu culture and history. Physical training and yoga are compulsory during the three-year course.

M. RANJITH RAO

Rama Rao: getting down to business

Every month the workers are to spend a week among the people trying to convince them of the Government's scheme for their welfare. After they pass out these workers have to spend a year in a constituency at the end of which they will be given eligibility certificates and a silver crest carrying the party symbol. With this they are qualified to contest future assembly elections as a party nominee. But to join the school any party worker must be a graduate.

A. PRABHAKAR RAO

Panduranga Reddy: key post

Controversial Choice: It is, however, ironical that the school's first principal, Panduranga Reddy, 41, has been found guilty of forging a B.A. degree certificate when he applied for the job of a deputy superintendent of police in 1970. Reddy first denied the offence in court but later admitted his guilt and pleaded for mercy. The judge, taking a lenient view as he was a first-time offender, let him go on a bond for good behaviour for an offence that carries a seven-year jail term and a stiff fine.

Telugu Desam sources say they are not aware of Panduranga Reddy's past. But the stocky Reddy, who runs a coaching school for those writing the Union and Andhra Pradesh public service commission examinations, says: "I joined the party in the early days for I was convinced for a long time the people of the state have not been getting their due from the Centre." Commented a responsible partyman: "It is obvious that President Rama Rao has been badly advised for a person with dubious credentials cannot be the principal of the party's school. It can be bad for the party's image." But despite the jarring note that Reddy's appointment has introduced, Rama Rao's plans for his party are an indication that he is taking his new role more seriously than any on the screen.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

WEST BENGAL

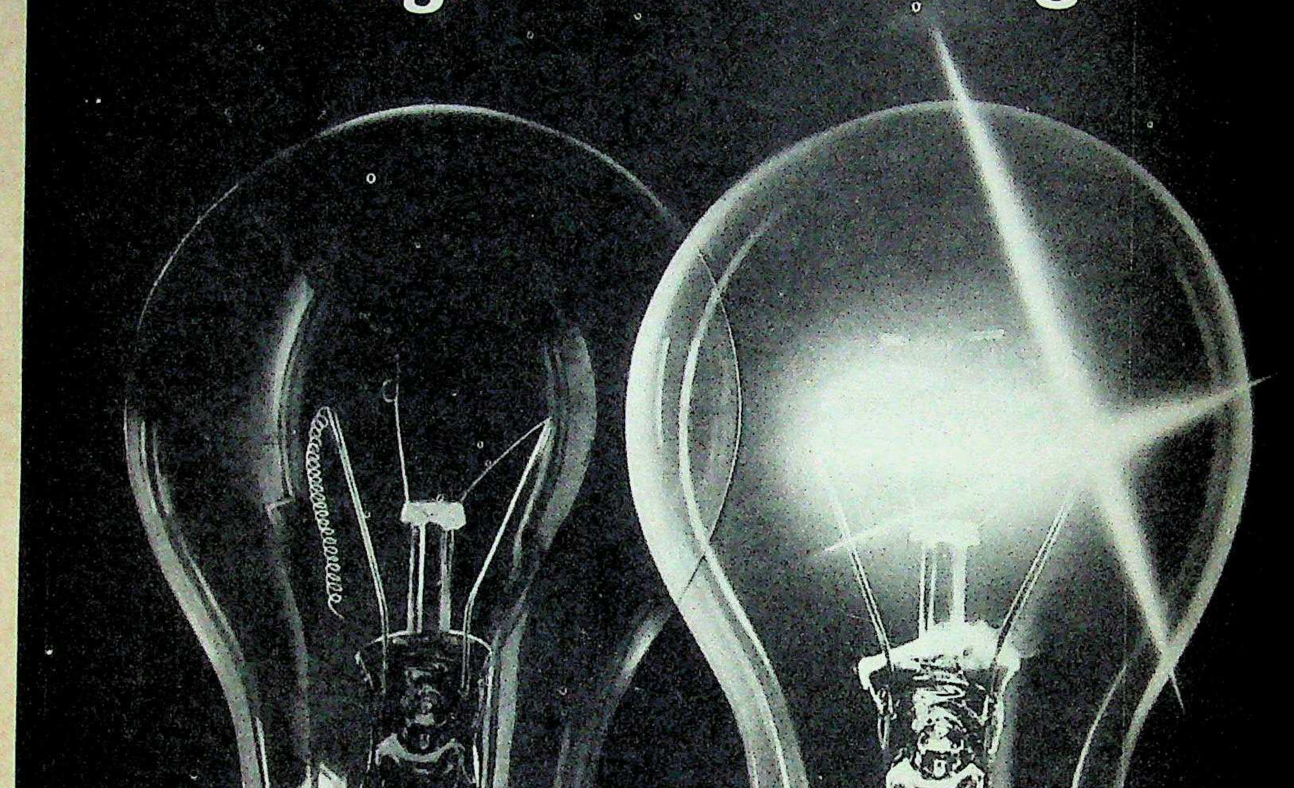
Congress Homecoming

THE CONGRESS(I) in West Bengal seems to revel in being a house divided. Last fortnight's merger of the two Congresses in the state is a case in point. By all accounts, the party had received a major shot in the arm with stalwarts of the acknowledged stature of Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi joining its ranks. Unfortunately, Congress(I) leaders appear to see the reinforcements as a threat to their own positions, and even maintain that the event cannot be called a merger because, as a Congress(I) leader put it, this term implies that the Congress(S) was "a force which it clearly was not". Subrata Mukherjee, who was present in Delhi when the 'homecoming' was announced by party General Secretary C.M. Stephen, commented: "We see no reason why we should go to town over this development. For the last six months Dasmunshi and others had been wanting to join our party. There is no question of our party gaining in actual strength through this."

The people who have just joined the Congress(I), naturally, feel quite differently. Zainal Abedin, Congress(S) Legislature Party leader and former minister, said em-

air.

A case even Harvard might find interesting



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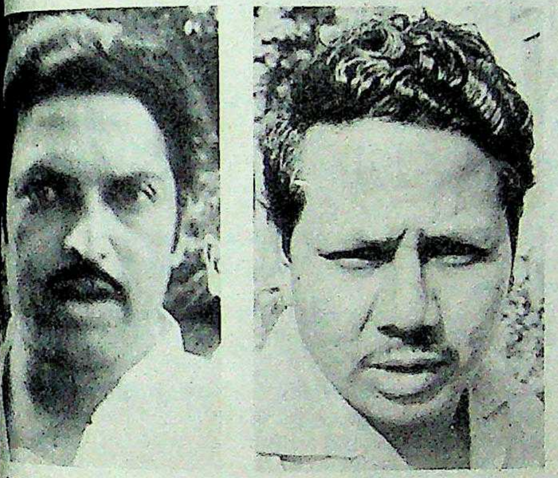
ally: "We have merged with the Cong-
) and the united Congress will be a
greater force in West Bengal." On the
f it, this is exactly how it should be.
nshi, for instance, was a member of
Congress Working Committee between
and 1977 and is known as an able orga-
and an eloquent speaker. But that is
ely why Mukherjee and others feel jit-
nd play down his entry. As Mukherjee
"Even the high command did not
any importance to Dasmunshi's ad-
n. The prime minister kept herself
from the entire proceedings, which was
rked contrast to that time in Kerala
she was personally present in Trivan-
to welcome back A.K. Antony. This
ven Kamalapati Tripathi was not pre-
the press conference at which Stephen
nced the decision to take back Das-
i and others."



Mukherjee (left) and Dasmunshi: party games

High-level Talks: The Congress(I) high
and probably knew of the opposition
ongress(S) leaders would face, and the
merger exercise was gone through in
with the party's state leadership left
the cold. Even West Bengal Congress-
esident Ananda Gopal Mukherjee was
edly informed only at the last minute.
unshi himself said a few days before
erger: "I am in touch with the prime
er and Rajiv Gandhi." Asked whether
d had any discussions with state-level
rs, he remarked: "No. I am in touch
the two people who really matter in
party."

Dasmunshi's sharp retort sums up his
de to the state Congreess(I) leadership
this is already being resented. District
leaders like Nurul Islam in Burdwan
made clear their unhappiness at the de-
to take back people they consider clear
. Islam's rival in Burdwan is Pradip
acharya and further factionalism is
usly on the cards. Similarly, the West
Dinajpur district unit of the Congress(I) has no love for Abedin, known for his bad temper and sharp tongue.

In that context, the merger would only exacerbate the infighting in a party which already boasts of three factions: one led by Subrata Mukherjee and owing allegiance to Pranab Mukherjee, another led by youth leader Somen Mitra and swearing by A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury, and the third, including state party President Mukherjee, trying to steer a neutral course. The reasons for the quarrels are often childish: former state unit president Ajit Panja has mostly stayed away from the Assembly because he was not allotted a seat in the second row of Congress(I) benches, just behind legislature party leader Abdus Sattar and Chief Whip Subrata Mukherjee

Truncated Party: Meanwhile, it was evident that the merger would not be complete. Even as Dasmunshi was negotiating with Central party leaders, Arunava Ghosh, a prominent leader of the Chhatra Parishad(S) wrote a letter to the editor of a Calcutta daily saying that "to preserve the sanctity of the state Congress(S) president's office, he (Dasmunshi) should resign before he formally surrenders to Indira Gandhi". Ghosh maintained that not all Congress(S) workers wanted to join the Congress(I) and said that while 57 members of the state party committee had supported Dasmunshi's move, 11 had opposed it. By last fortnight, senior leaders like Ghosh and Maitreyee Bose had not indicated that they were going over to the other camp and it was evident that a truncated Congress(S) would carry on in West Bengal. As Abedin said: "Nobody worthy of any mention would remain to lead it."

The coming together of their arch rivals has also not caused much of a flutter in the Marxist camp. Saroj Mukherjee, secretary of the West Bengal unit of the Communist Party of India-Marxist explains that the two Congresses had been working together for over a year but had little to show for it, as the election results last June showed. In fact, the Marxist feel that the entire merger exercise was aimed at shoring up the Congress(S) leaders' careers. While that is too cynical a view, there is no doubt that quite a few Congress(I) leaders feel the same way. And with such feelings predominating the way should be paved for some interesting party games in the months to come.

—SUMANTA SEN

TRIPURA

A Stormy Surrender

THE STAGE is set in Tri
pura for the expected surren
der later this month of triba
extremist leader Binond
Jamatia, 45, erstwhile hea
of the All Tripura People
Liberation Organisatio
which had set up a government in exile in th
Chittagong hill tracts in Bangladesh. The or
ganisation broke up last November follo
wing serious personality clashes betwee
Jamatia and his 'foreign minister', Chu
Koloi. In fact, Jamatia's decision to surren
der was prompted by his fear that Kol
would try to liquidate him and, last for
night, even as Jamatia moved around in th
Udapur area, the police kept a close watch t
ensure that there were no attempts on his lif

Jamatia, accused in the notorious Ka
chanpur and Agartala conspiracy case
would have been nabbed by the administra
tion much earlier, but for Tripura Chi
Minister Nripen Chakravarti, who believe
that the surrender of the leader with about
of his followers—among them his close aid
Jagadish Jamatia, Ganesh Koloi and Ha
adhan Riang—would be a major set-bac
for the three-year-old underground mov
ment in the state.

The former schoolteacher-turned-ex
mist has already had two meetings wi
Chakravarti and the number two in the C
binet, Dasarath Deb, a tribal. Neither Cha
ravarti nor Deb has disclosed what happ
ned at these *tête-à-têtes*, but it is presum
that apart from demanding the withdraw
of all cases against him, Jamatia has al
asked for financial assistance, a move th
will come in for heavy criticism.

Political Ploy: Jamatia's surrend
would upset the Tripura Upajati Ju
Samity (TUJS), his former party. TUJS Gene
Secretary Nagendra Jamatia said bitte
that "Binonda will now be joining the M
xists" and described his surrender as "a sin
ter move on the part of the chief minister
bribe the extremists, whom we expelled fr
our party, into attacking us as we constit
the biggest threat to the Marxists' traditio
influence among the tribals". The TUJS h
won six seats in the Assembly elections l
January.

Earlier it had lost three promin
members, Debabrata Koloi, Biswad
Barma and Sarlapada Jamatia, who br
away to form the Tripura Hill Peoples Par
because they felt the TUJS had made

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ke by allying with the Congress(I) in ast election. The TUJS leaders see the ists' hand in this development—the ists themselves deny this—and fear the Jamatia surrender is another example of Marxist mischief.

Elsewhere, fingers were being crossed. former chief minister Sukhamoy upta, now a Congress(I) legislator: s surrender will not solve any problems. oo long, Chakravarti has been playing ame of wooing rival sections of extre- but the problem continues. Look at Bejoy Hrangkhal did."

Similar Story: Hrangkhal is the man d the 1980 Mandai massacre. He surred to the Government, settled down in sa village, managing on loans from the in Bank, and disappeared suddenly last August, only to reappear in the extremists' hide-out in the Chittagong hill tracts. The Government maintains that the extremists kidnapped Hrangkhal, but there is evidence that Hrangkhal used his surrender to obtain a breather.

In fact, one of the first things he did was to marry—invitations went out to everyone who mattered, including the top brass in the Special Branch—and his pregnant wife Linda disappeared with him. According to Agartala police, she has since given birth to a daughter. Binonda Jamatia, too, seems to be making the most of the opportunity. A well-to-do villager, he married off his daughter last month in great style at Dewanabari village, about 55 km from Agartala; 300 people were invited.

Binonda Jamatia: breathing space

His dossier makes interesting reading. More a politician than a hardened underground activist, he tried to become chairman of the Tripura Peoples Liberation Organisation, although he had never taken part in his own action programmes. He rarely visited the government in exile's headquarters at Thangnan, a three-day walk from Tripura. Even so, he tried to curb and even eliminate his rival, the self-styled Lt-Colonel Chuni Koloi, the spoilt child of rich pa rents in Telliamura, who had received

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AHMEDABAD

Shock Tactics

AS A protest, it was simply unique. About 150 textile workers from the Monogram and Marzden mills attempted to "commit suicide" on March 27 by throwing themselves into the Kankaria Lake in Ahmedabad. The mass attempt at self-annihilation was in protest against the continuing closure of the mills; shut down last September because of heavy losses. None of the workers got to the water, however: the over 600 policemen who had cordoned off the lake, nearly a mile in perimeter, arrested 119 of them, bundled them into waiting vans and whisked them off to jail.

The workers, nevertheless, felt that they had got their point across. Said a tearful Sugarabibi, 59, of Marzden Mills: "I worked in the mill for 10 years as there was no one to support me. I have no savings left and there is hardly any meaning in living like this." Wailed Chotumiya, 48, a loomshed weaver: "I can no longer beg for loans. Either I should rob or die. It is better that I die." Among those who attempted suicide were 25 women. Asked an angry Mariambibi: "How can we live like this? One of us who was pregnant and in labour was turned out of a hospital because she had no money. Later, she delivered on a city footpath. We are suffering for no fault of ours."

Heavy Bandobast: The police had made careful arrangements. All roads leading to the 500-year-old man-made lake were blocked off. A day earlier, Ashok Bhatt, Bharatiya Janata Party MLA and leader of the party's newly-started Bharatiya Kamdar Parishad (BKP), which is spearheading the agitation, and 107 workers had been hauled in. Despite the heavy police, State Reserve Police and fire-brigade bandobast—expert divers were also on hand—the workers managed to assemble at Kankaria Zoo opposite the lake. Then they charged towards the water. The police arrested a few bystanders in their overenthusiasm: when the workers were produced in court, the magistrate asked the police why they had arrested a teacher, a student, a rickshaw driver and two businessmen.

Police arrest a worker: unique protest

Over 1,000 textile workers have been unsuccessfully agitating for six months to get the mills reopened. They feel that the Government is turning a deaf ear to their demand because an opposition party is spearheading the agitation. Bhatt had told Union ministers Veerendra Patil and Pranab Mukherjee in a memorandum in February that if the mills were not reopened with government help, the workers would be forced to commit suicide. There was no response and the workers decided to go ahead. As 28-year-old textile worker Sorab Khan said: "No one cares about our suffering. We cannot bear it anymore."

Desperate Workers: Congress(I) leaders called the mass suicide attempt a political stunt. Bhatt retorts: "It will sound a joke to all insensitive people. But to those whose kitchen fires are dead, this may mean many things." BKP sources aver that the 27 workers who have died since the closure were victims of heart attacks, abnormal blood pressure and depression. In addition, Sajjan Singh, 27, committed suicide on January 27. Cautions Bhatt: "More will follow as the workers are not able to battle hunger anymore."

Bhatt alleged in the state Assembly last fortnight that Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki was deliberately not taking any interest. Solanki was, however, quick to retort: "The taking over of mills is done by the Centre. All I can do is extend concessions to entrepreneurs who are ready to take over the sick mills."

There was no sign of this happening. Meanwhile, the placid Kankaria Lake, famous as the final resting place of estranged couples, has acquired a new, ominous notoriety.

—RAMESH MENON

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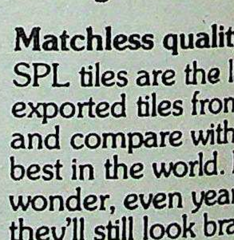

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aining from the Mizo National The daredevil Koloi was fast becoajor threat for Jamatia.

dent Decision: Matters came to a st November when Chuni wound up gnan headquarters and returned to . Attempts by Hrangkhal to reconwo warring factions failed. Right huni Koloi's boys have a clear adover Binonda Jamatia's: following a f raids on police stations, they have d, among other things, 17 rifles, a achine-gun and about 300 rounds of tion. He also continues with his tax collection in the Amarpur subdiWith things hotting up. Jamatia proought it was time he responded to feelers. His contact was former MLA Saha, who was also instrumental in ng Hrangkhal to surrender.

onda Jamatia is not likely to find a the TUJS, mainly because he had d that party's electoral adjustment Congress(I). Thus he is *persona non* ith moderate TUJS leaders Nagendra and Shyamacharan Tripuri, who saw stment through.

atia's best bet is the Marxists. Coinly, Chakravarti had entered Tripura 30 years ago by inciting tribals to vior realising their rights. Since then, the s have ceased to be a purely tribal esulting in their alienation from the r generations of both tribals and s. Hence their attempts to woo extreaders. The resentment this causes the Bengalis is a price the Marxists ve to pay. As a senior leader said: may call these efforts gambles. But e gambles which we have to take." It Binonda Jamatia's turn to come to the he party. —SUMANTA SEN in Agartala

TAKA

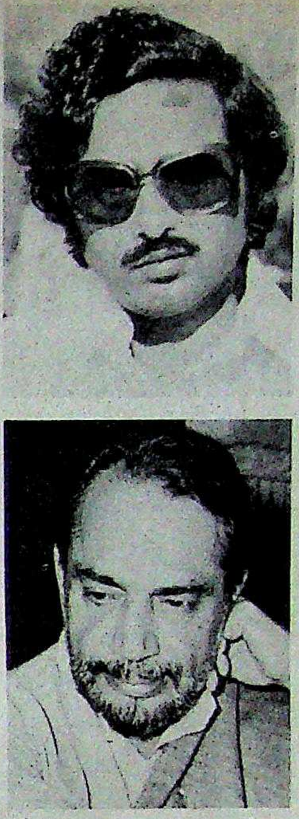
gnificant ictory

CHIEF Minister Ramakrishna Hegde of Karnataka is fast proving to be a tough customer. Last fortnight, his gamble to put up two of his Cabinet ministers for the Legislative Council seats . The two ministers, Abdul Nazir Sab G.R. Sindhia, trounced the two indets backed by the Congress(I) and the way Kranti Ranga in what was possie most hotly disputed tussle since the ly elections in January.

hat made the win more credible was that though the Janata Government strength is 126 in the 225-member Assembly—with seven members defecting to S. Bangarappa's Kranti Ranga recently—the party's candidates polled 141 votes and the independents 78. The voting pattern indicated that at least eight members from the Congress(I) and the Kranti Ranga had indulged in cross-voting. Of these, five are estimated to be from the Ranga and three from the Congress(I).

Shock Defeat: While the victory was a shot in the arm for the Janata Party, it was a technical knock-out for Bangarappa, who had recently split the party and had even threatened to topple the fledgling ministry. While Bangarappa was shown his place, which means the back benches of the Assembly, the defeat was a rude shock for the Congress(I) which had imported such heavyweights as Union ministers Veerendra Patil and S.M. Krishna, MP's Rajesh Pilot and F.M. Khan, and Shalinitai Patil, wife of Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil, to lobby for the polls. The defeat cast doubts on the leadership of Veerappa Moily in the Assembly. Said a distraught Moily after the counting: "I don't really know what happened. We seemed certain of causing an upset win."

Hegde, naturally, was ebullient after the win and said: "The victory signified the defeat of communal forces and money power." What Hegde was referring to was the fact that the independents, M.V. Venkatappa and N.R. Jagadeesh, belonged to the two dominant communities in the state, the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats and the Congress(I) hoped that there would be cross-voting by the Janata Party which is heavily packed by members of these communities in its assembly group of 86. In fact, both Bangarappa and Moily, in close touch with each other, thought that it was a clever move to back the independents. Although Jagadeesh and Venkatappa are identified with the Congress(I) the party decided to field them as independents because Bangarappa said he could back them without identifying himself directly with the Congress(I).



Bangarappa (top) and Hegde: bitter tussle

Victorious ministers Nazir Sab (top) and Sindhia

Smooth Manoeuvring: With the Ranga's eight and the Congress(I)'s 81 members Moily and Bangarappa thought they could topple Hegde by wooing some Janata MLA's to their side. But Hegde proved more than a match for them. He spoke to all his party's MLA's and warned them not to cross-vote; he held talks individually with the 18 Bharatiya Janata Party MLA's, the six Communist Party of India-Marxist and Communist Party of India members and the 14 independents who back his Government. He wooed the five MLA's of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samithi and the lone All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam member. He also spoke to Bangarappa's supporters.

Hegde was helped in his cause by the dissidence building up against Moily's leadership in the Congress(I), stirred by his main detractor F.M. Khan, former chief minister R. Gundu Rao's close associate. Said a Congress(I) leader: "The defeat has made two things clear: Bangarappa is out of our schemes for the moment and Moily has been shaken enough for us to question his leadership."

Crucial Election: The next round of the battle between the Congress(I) and the Janata Party in the state is to take place in the crucial Kanakapura by-election on May 15, where Hegde is the star candidate. He chose Kanakapura because he felt that it was close to the capital Bangalore, being hardly

60 km away, and also because the constituency had only a small percentage of Brahmin voters. Being a Brahmin himself Hegde did not want to be identified with a community as it would prove dangerous for his Government's stability as well as play into the hands of Bangarappa who has been posing as the champion of the backward classes. Kanakapura is dominated by Vokkaligas and Hegde has appointed H.D. Deve Gowda, a Cabinet minister and a senior leader of the community, to head his campaign. The Congress(I) plans to put up K.G. Thimme Gowda, a Vokkaliga leader, to counter Deve Gowda's influence.

Meanwhile, both parties are busy revamping their organisation in the state. The Janata Party is likely to shift Nazir Sab from the post of party president and appoint Manjunath, a Harijan leader. The Congress(I) is undecided as to who should head the party in the state: three names that have figured prominently are K.H. H.C. Srikantiah and K.H. Ranganath Patil and Srikantiah belong to the dominant communities, the mantle may on Ranganath, a Harijan leader.

The parties are now preparing for panchayat and municipal poll, which is to be held in June. The local bodies poll be another major battle. The next months are going to prove crucial for Janata Government.

—RAJ CHENGA

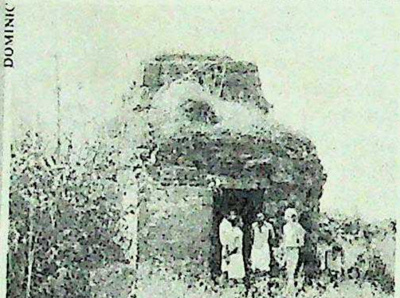
KERALA

Gateway To Heaven

THE TEMPLE of Mangala Devi is situated at a height of 4,500 ft near the wildlife sanctuary of Thekkady, in Kerala's Idukki district. The perilously steep path that leads to the temple does not, however, deter the scores of tourists that flock here at this time of the year. They come not for the peace of religion, though, but for the chemical satisfaction obtained from drugs—cheap and plentiful ganja, which is cultivated illicitly all around Mangala Devi.

Today, the temple premises are pervaded by the soporific smell of drugs and illicit liquor. The sanctum sanctorum resembles an untidy kitchen, littered with stale bread, leftover pieces of meat, banana skins and coconut shells. A dilapidated structure inside the temple, reminiscent of a shivalinga, has been turned into a hearth where the tourists prepare coffee and cook their meals. And when the moon shines down on the ancient stones, the addicts dance in ecstatic abandon. The temple has long since ceased to be in active use as a shrine.

Cheap Drugs: "We are attracted and inspired by the antiquity of the temple. The first puff of ganja, like the first kiss, is always sweet here," quips Miss Hike, 23, a blonde who has come all the way from Cologne, West Germany. She claims that she has been a ganja addict for eight years now, and is accompanied by five Swedish youths. Wearing bangles and bead necklaces, Hike opens her bag to reveal a small lump of ganja. Beaming, she discloses that the stuff cost a paltry Rs 50. In Cologne, it would have cost her Rs 2,000. "What a blessing—ganja here is pure and the traders are generous and kind. They never squeeze us for money," she said. Another German youth says enthusiastically: "The goddess of Mangala Devi blesses us to acquire ganja and we do the pilgrimage."



The Mangala Devi temple (top) and Hike preparing for a smoke: an addict's paradise

The crop is grown either as stray bushes in residential courtyards or in larger clumps. Each bush can be sold for more than Rs 1,000. It is a source of livelihood for many; when found to be growing ganja, a housewife in Kattapana broke down at the feet of one of the officials, crying: "Please do not charge me for this offence. I have no other means of livelihood. My husband is aged and my children are studying."

Lucrative Crop: The coveted crop is harvested in March and April every year. Forest officials pretend ignorance but it is clear that without their blessings the crop could not be harvested. The ganja is reportedly collected secretly in the Kattapana area, from where it is despatched to different parts of the country. Often raids are conducted by excise and forest officials who set the crops ablaze. The 2 m tall plant is hard to destroy otherwise. The hazards of the mountainous district and the fear of wild animals also keep officials at bay. Only natives feel secure in the area. The cultivators, too, enlist the help of the Muthuvan tribe to manage their ganja farms.

Detection for the cultivators meant a fine of a mere Rs 5,000. Only recently has the Government decided to imprison offenders for a period of two years. But a handful of conscientious guards are inadequate to control the menace. In 1975, an IPS officer, Dr P.J. Alexander had submitted a report suggesting the means to reorganise the Excise Department. Later, in 1978, the then joint excise commissioner, N. Krishnan Nair, had raided parts of Idukki. So far, however, official attempts to strike at the ganja plantations have had little effect. For some time to come, tourists are going to continue to trek to Manga Devi for a cheap and ex larating smoke.

—G. SHAHE

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—RAJ CHENGA

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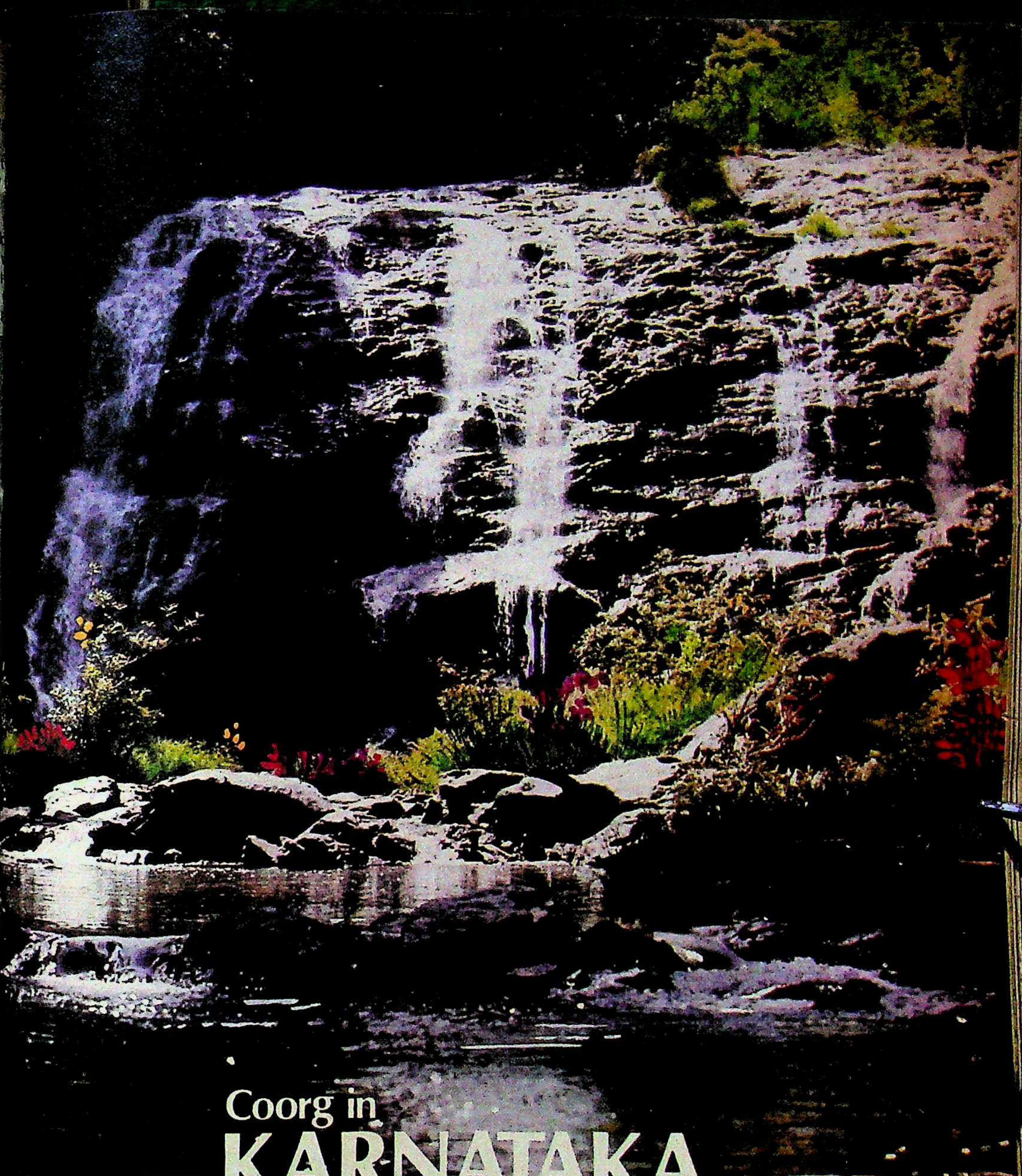

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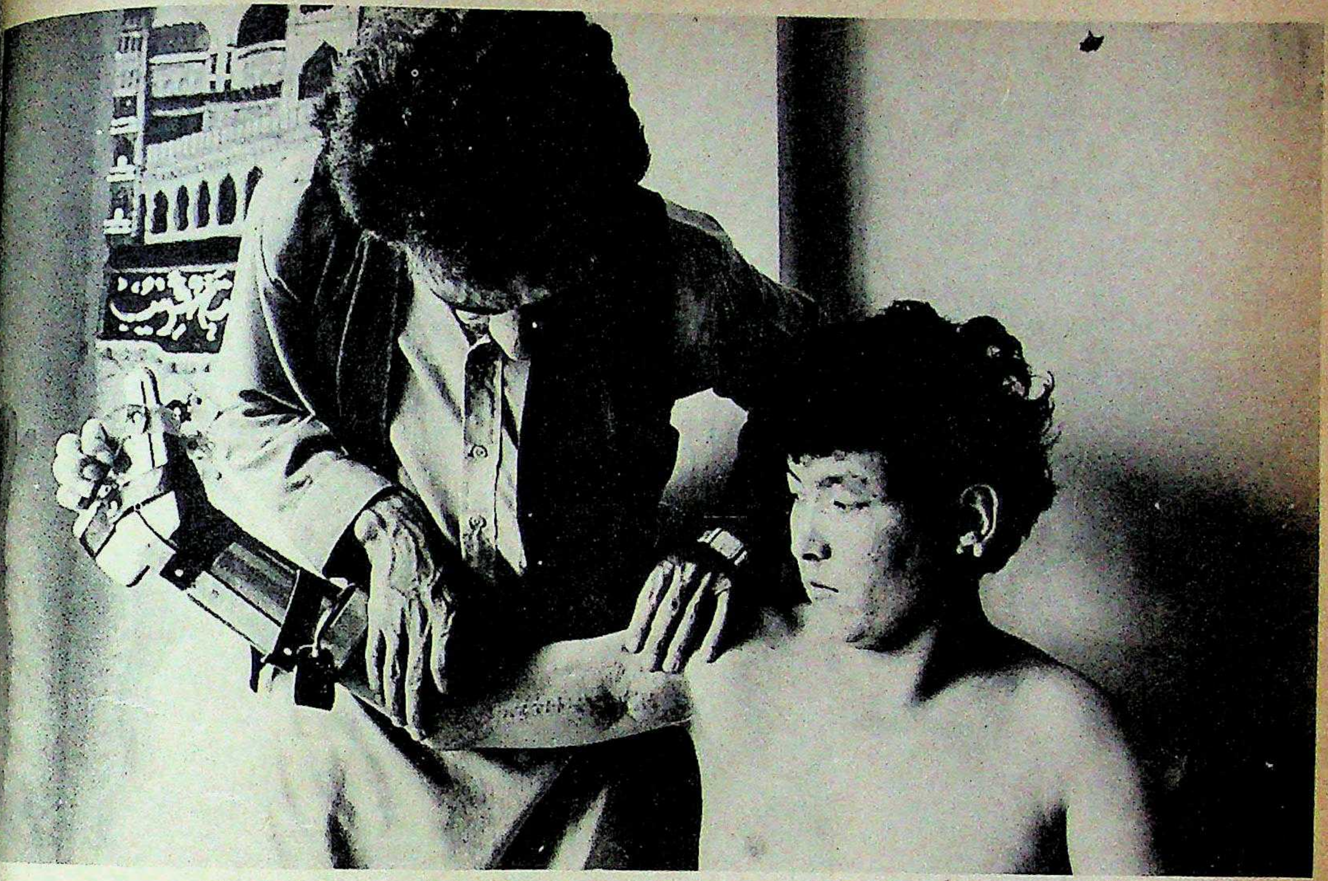


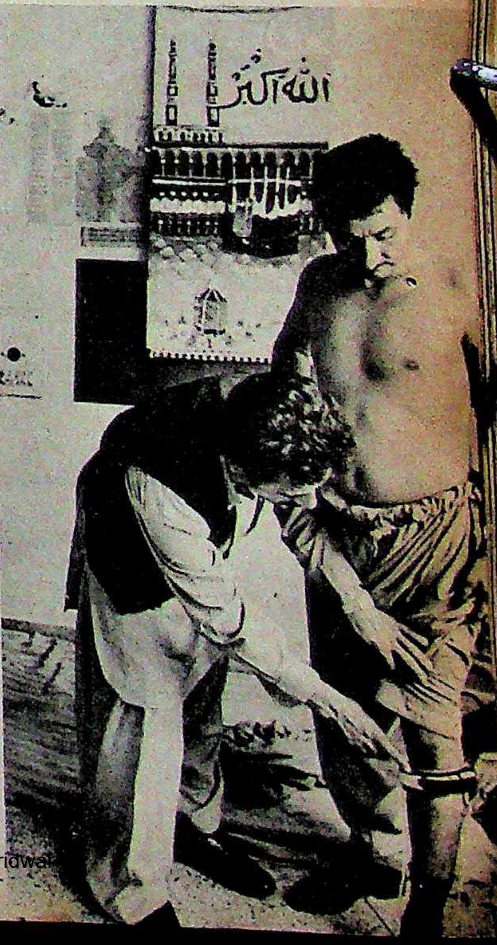
AFGHANISTAN

Profiles In Courage

IS now 40 months since their T-72s nto the streets of Kabul and it is y evident to the Soviets that their e military machine in Afghanistan is e nearer their objective of physical l of the country. But if the Soviets to be heading for a situation similar to e the US found itself trapped in in m, they at least have one major advan- For over two years now, the only jour- who have been allowed in are East eans or those sympathetic to the Soviet Consequently, the military situation in istan remains a combination of educ- esswork and second-hand information. ast fortnight, INDIA TODAY obtained a hensive and authentic first-hand ac- f the organisation and areas of oper- the major Mujahideen groups from y members of the resistance. One is nder Maulam Berdi, a guerrilla leader g in the northern provinces of Balkh zjan bordering the Soviet Union. The other is Kamaal, a 38-year-old urban guerrilla who operates in the key city of Mazar-e-Sharif. The two men had been secretly brought in to New Delhi for urgent medical treatment after they were wounded in separate battles. Taken to private nursing homes where secrecy is assured, they were operated on before being whisked away to one of the "safe houses" that the rebels have rented in south Delhi.

Secure in the knowledge that they will be leaving for the battlefront shortly, they agreed to an exclusive meeting with INDIA TODAY at which senior resistance personnel were present. AMIT MITRA, a research scholar, who has close rapport with the Afghan underground, and Senior Writer DILIP BOBB, who was among the first journalists to fly into Afghanistan after the Soviets moved in, met the wounded rebels separately on two occasions and subjected them to intensive questioning. What emerges is as accurate a picture of the current situation and the state of the rebel forces as it is possible to obtain. Their report:

Berdi (above) and Kamaal display their wounds: indomitable spirit



MORE than the battle-scarred bodies, it is the faces that first command attention. Cold, expressionless, unsmiling. The eyes have the weary look of someone who has seen too much blood and witnessed too many deaths. And yet, they cannot conceal the fire that burns inside the battered bodies, that has pitted them against almost impossible odds, that keeps them chipping away at the mightiest army in the world. There is nothing as deadly as a guerrilla fighting a holy war, a *jehad* that is a commitment not to country alone but to God. These are not fire-breathing fanatics but deadly killing machines, made so by history, and honed to a single-minded purpose by the presence in their country of over 100,000 godless aliens.

Commander Berdi is just 28. He was 25, the youngest child of a family of two brothers and two sisters, when the first Soviet tanks rumbled past his little village just across the Russian border on December 27, 1979. That was the moment when his private war began and he picked up his ancient .303 rifle and presented himself at the nearest Mujahideen base. Forty months of almost continuous fighting, constantly on the move, has toughened his body into a block of granite. A year after he took up arms against the Soviets, he was promoted to commander in charge of 500 guerrillas.

Battle-scarred: In the last 40 months, he has fought nine major battles and innumerable minor ones. He has eight bullet wounds on his body to testify to that. The last one almost took his life. Carried by comrades across the border into Pakistan and then to India for expert medical attention, he is back on his feet but his right arm, enveloped in a metal cast, is virtually paralysed. Doctors say that he cannot move his fingers for another year. The news almost shattered him for the simple reason that he can no longer pull the trigger of his captured Kalashnikov. But he can use his left hand to throw grenades and plant mines. By the time this appears in print, he will be back on the battlefield. "They need me there," is his unemotional reply.

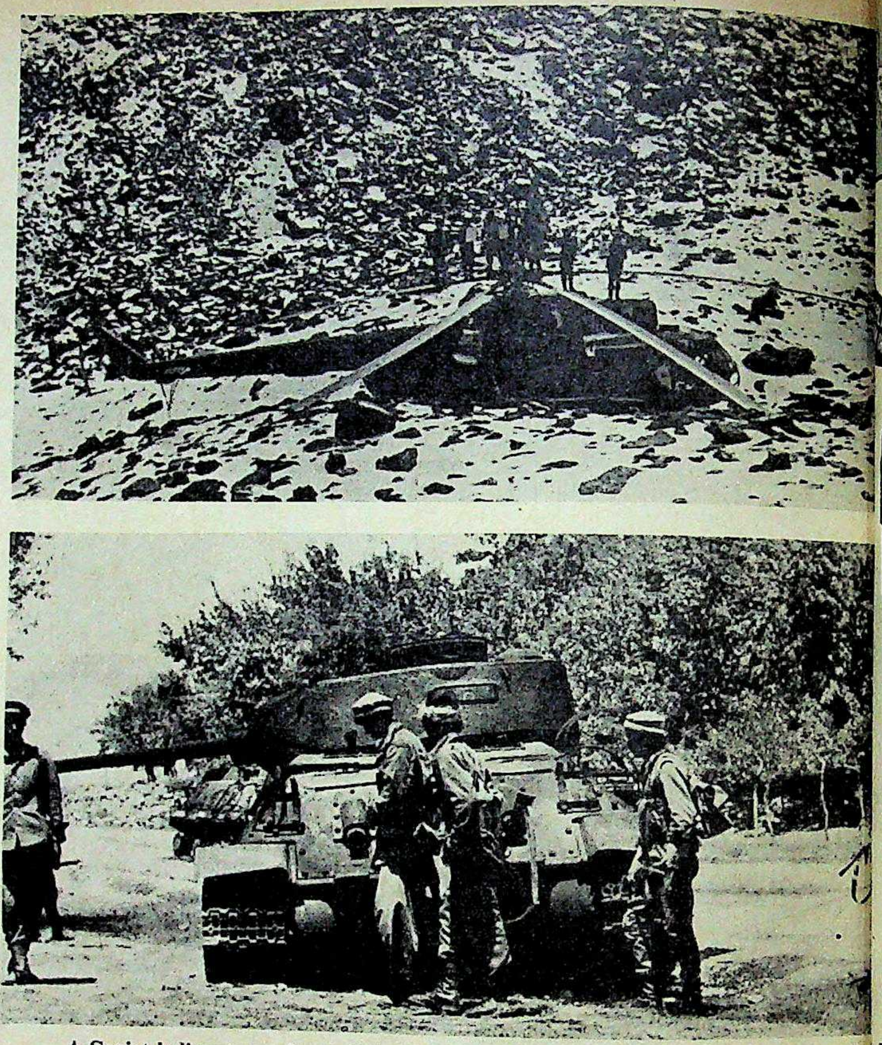
Kamaal, 38, wounded in a separate skirmish, accompanied Berdi to Delhi. He is an urban guerrilla operating in the town of Mazar-e-Sharif sniping at Soviet troops and harassing them by periodic forays. The last encounter left him with a bullet through his body which lodged near his spine. It was enough to paralyse his left leg which has not responded to treatment. He has had it fixed in a steel cast which allows him enough mobility to return and take an active part in the fighting.

Kamaal's and Berdi's injuries and their eagerness to get back into action is living testimony that the war being waged by the Mujahideen against the Soviets and the Babrak Karmal regime has increased in intensity, contrary to the claims being made in Kabul. In fact, there is mounting evidence that the resistance movement has not just grown but also embraced vital areas of control (*see map*). The very presence of the two guerrillas in New Delhi testifies to the organisational efficiency of the Mujahideen which successfully transported two seriously injured members from a remote battlefield on the Soviet border into the expert hands of an Indian doctor in New Delhi.

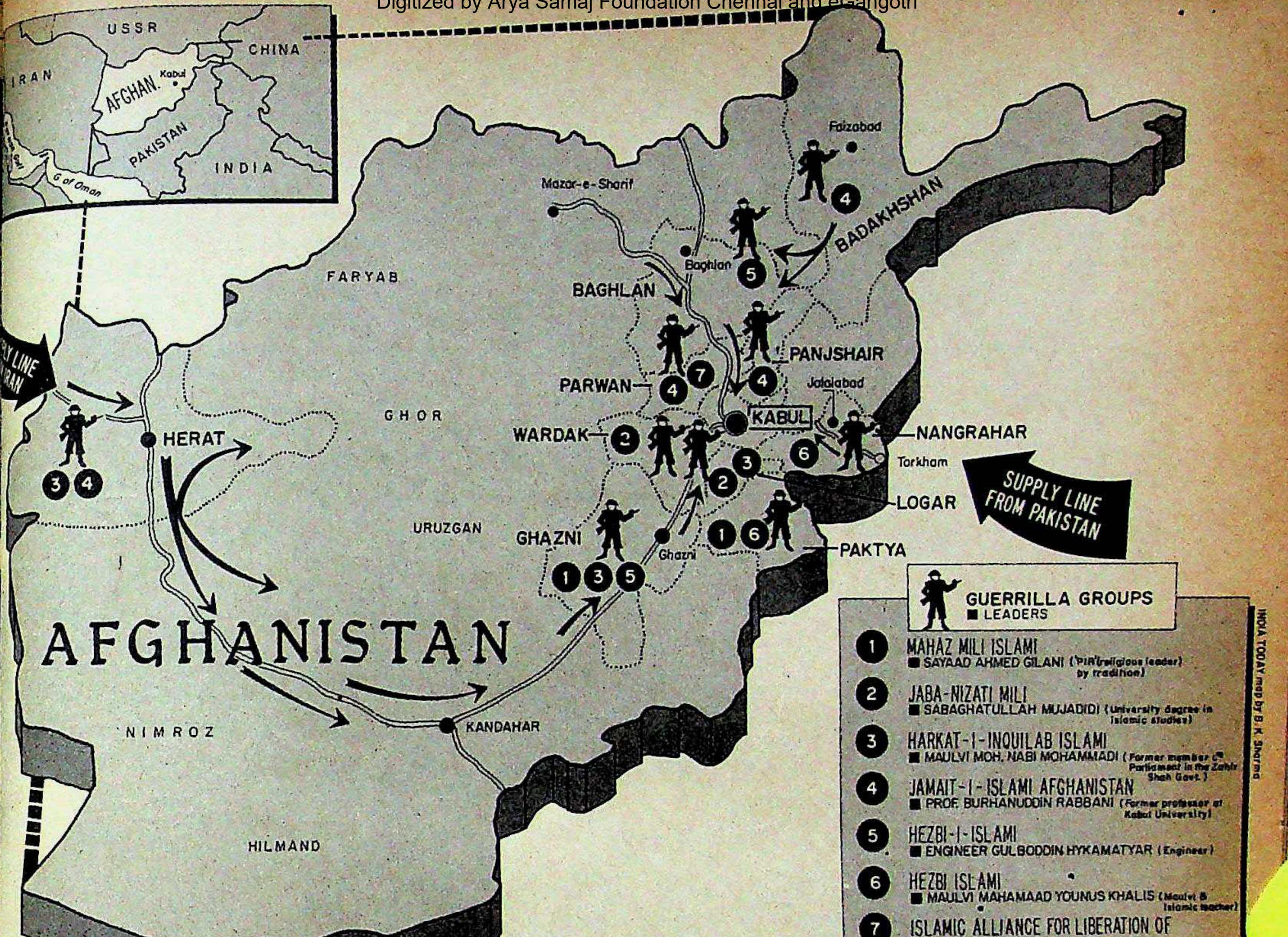
Ruthless Fighters: Berdi is a typical example of the kind of people the Soviets are pitted against. An unlettered, self-taught fighter, Berdi is an expert in the use of a variety of weapons, most of which are captured from the enemy. In the rugged terrain that has been his home for 40 months, he is a dangerous opponent. Every cave, every hideout, every mountain track is burned into his brain. He admits that he punishes his m severely in the training programme he ru for them but it has undoubtedly saved ma lives. His entire life revolves around one s objective—to throw the Soviets out of country and with it the Government th support. He has a one-year-old son wh he has not seen for over nine months and fervent wish is that one day his son will jo him in the hills to fight alongside his fath

It might not come to that if Berd confidence and his description of the fighti in Afghanistan is any indication. "There no dearth of manpower," he boasts, "t people are with us everywhere. The o requirement is firepower which means ca turing Russian weapons and ammuniti from the government troops."

Berdi says that his men have captur 560 weapons of all varieties over the past ye along with ammunition. Reinforced wi this, Berdi and his men have "liberated Daulatbad in the province of Balkh fro government control and declared it a "fr



A Soviet helicopter and a tank knocked out by Mujahideen forces: high costs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INDIA TODAY map by B.K. Sharma

The old administration has been d and a people's court set up to settle s.

pressive Record: Daulatbad is just cess that the modest man grudgingly o. His battle record consists of nine conflicts stretching across the 300 km ntainous terrain embracing the towns arkin, Mordian, Kaldahar and abh. Berdi, however, does most of his g inside the Soviet Union making pre- e thrusts against Soviet troops poised e into Afghanistan.

was in the Russian town of Kelif that received the injury that almost took . The Kelif operation is typical of the and courage of the Mujahideen. learnt that a huge cache of weapons eing stockpiled for the Soviet troops their assault against rebel-controlled Afghanistan, he and his men slipped the border at night and reached the ut were detected and had to fight their of a ring of Soviet armour. In the he was knocked unconscious by a bullet.

The Mujahideen seem to have consolidated their hold and areas of control. Their biggest hurdle—the disunity and leadership differences among the various groups—now seems to have been settled and a strict code of control is now in force.

At great personal risk, his men carried him on their backs over the mountains and finally to the safety of an Afghan village. There are no doctors in the group and all wounds are treated with rudimentary field dressings. There is not a man in his 500-strong band who has not received wounds of one kind or another. But it is a tribute to their courage and spirit that in one year of fighting he has lost just 11 men.

HIS MOST successful operation was at Mordian in the province of Jowzjan. With about 100 of his men he encircled the town for five days keeping it under a constant state of siege, gradually whittling down the government troops who had control of the town. On the sixth day, they entered the town and after hand-to-hand street battles, forced the remaining troops to surrender. Almost 60 government soldiers were killed against only two of Berdi's men who were "martyred".

He says that he spared the lives of the governor and the remaining troops except for one. Casually, as if describing a routine event, he says: "I shot him in the head in front of everybody because he was a traitor and a spy." The Afghan troops were disarmed of 17 Kalashnikov rifles, four machine-guns and a variety of other weapons and ammunition. Enough to arm the Mujahideen for another battle.

It is obviously because of people like Berdi that the estimated 100,000 Soviet troops have failed miserably to crush the resistance. The Karmal regime has so far only managed to recruit approximately 35,000 Afghans into the army. The lack of this critical local support has been further exacerbated by desertions which have reportedly accounted for a third of the Afghan army. Currently, the Afghan Government has been conscripting 16-year-old boys in a desperate attempt to maintain respectable numbers and reports from Kabul indicate that compulsory military training will be introduced in schools from next month.

Low Morale: If that is an indication of the state of the Afghan army, the Soviets are having their own problems. Forty months of combat in an alien country in unfamiliar terrain and against a shadowy enemy has trapped them in a war that shows no signs of ending. Recent Soviet policy to minimise Soviet losses has led to Afghan troops being put in the frontline while the Soviets confine themselves to saturation bombing from the relative safety of aircraft or helicopter gunships or long-range shelling from their tanks.

The Soviets have recently expanded their main air bases in the country at Begram, north of Kabul, Shindand, near the Iranian border, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Sardeh Dam Ghazni, near the Pakistan border. Two regiments of soldiers equipped with SAM-8 missile batteries have been brought in to guard the airfields while MiG-27s have replaced the MiG-23s.

The number of MI-24 gunships have also increased dramatically. This obviously means that the Soviet strategy is to use the more sophisticated weapons at their disposal to fight the war from long distance and try and deny the Mujahideen close combat conditions under which they have proved far superior to the Soviets. The Mujahideen underground also reports that the Soviets now have permanent military structures and accommodation at most of their major bases which would indicate that they have reconciled to a long, if not permanent, stay.

On the other hand, the Mujahideen seem to have consolidated their hold and areas of control. They now have regular supply lines from Iran and Pakistan (*see map)* and plenty of food supplied to them by the local population. Their biggest hurdle—the disunity and leadership differences among the various groups—now seems to have been settled and a strict code of control is now in force.

Better Coordination: There are seven major guerrilla groups operating in Afghanistan with their areas of operation clearly demarcated. Guerrilla leader Mohamm Kabir, better known as "engineer Kab because of his engineering degree, says t "within Afghanistan there is no infight any longer among the groups. In fact, ma of them work together where the geograp areas of influence overlap." Kabir says i the unity of a common cause—of liberat the country from the Soviets—that shown the guerrillas that there is no profit them in fighting each other as well.

Kabir claims that there is evidence t the Soviets are now resorting to chemi warfare, much like the Americans did Vietnam, to try and flush out the guerril from their mountain hideouts. Kabir clai that at least 3,000 people have been kille Punjshahir and Lowgar by what the loc call "yellow rain". Though that indicates desperation of the Soviets, it has also ma the Mujahideen even more determined battle to the bitter end. At the mome however, the end seems to be nowhere sight. The Soviet troops have the firepo but not the commitment. For Mujahideen, it is the other way round. long as that situation continues, the bat for Afghanistan promises to be one that Soviets at least will not like to feature in th history books.

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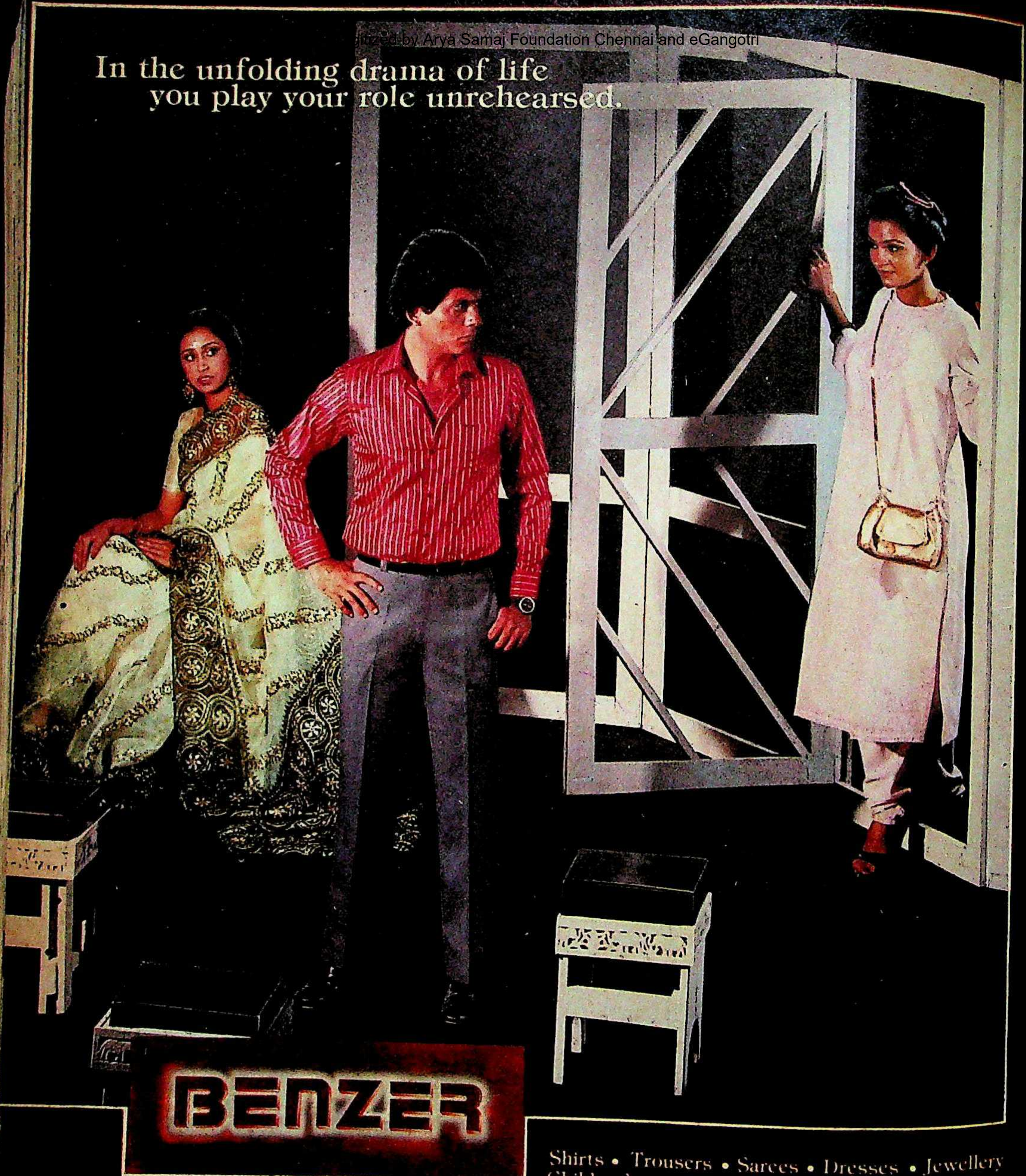
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RASHTRA

hild Abuse

THE PACKED central hall of Bombay's towering Vidhan Sabha building, usually the scene of deafening exchanges between ruling and opposition legislators, was this educed to a stunned silence. Replying adjournment motion by the Opposi- Maharashtra's Minister of State for Affairs, Vilas Deshmukh, admitted a shocked house on March 30 that the ntendent and the cook of a govern- un residential primary school for Adi- ildren in the state's backward Yavat- istrict stood accused of raping 14 girls in their charge.

nforming the Assembly that the two d had only four days been arrested and for- charged, Deshmukh that preliminary enqui- ith the girls—mere child- etween the ages of six and ad confirmed reports by a er at the ashramshala that had been repeatedly ted for some months.

Widespread Concern: The on, both from treasury es and the Opposition, shocked outcry. There calls for an investigation 313 ashramshalas which Maharashtra adivasis free ntial schooling. Since inception a decade ago, mshalas have become po- with the backward com- ty and today the tiny boarding schools over 40,000 students in Maharashtra's belts.

Less than a week later the news of yet another molestation charge made by ashramshala students. Alle- that the assistant teacher who accompa- them to a sports match with a rival l "tried doing things" on the bus while ning, two 14-year-olds from the Nanza ashramshala, just 120 km from hi village where the earlier charges nated, complained to Yavatmal's tribal re officer of maltreatment and attemp- rape.

Said V.N.Gajibe, tribal welfare officer Yavatmal and Buldhana districts, who both complaints with the local police: ashramshala scheme has been very ssful so far, since even the poorest asi parents are now encouraged to send children to these schools, and girls who not earlier getting any education at all are now increasingly enrolled. But if this kind of abuse takes place it will set back the entire programme and lead to withdrawal of children."

Swift Action: Last fortnight, the Government moved rapidly to stem the rot. N. S. Umbharkar, assistant teacher at the Nanza ashramshala, was arrested and formally charged under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code, and in Harshi the police started by arresting Superintendent Govind Mahakale and Maruti Sitaram Rajne, the cook. A week later, after enquiries and intensive questioning of the schoolgirls revealed that Charandas Bhadikar, the original informant who had alerted Gajibe to the abuse, was equally involved in its perpetration, Yavatmal's Pusad taluk police promptly picked him up and had him remanded to their custody for further questioning.

Students at the Yavatmal primary school: sordid episode

Moving rapidly to sew up the matter and avert widespread panic, Maharashtra's Additional Inspector-General of Police (CID), Ramakant Kulkarni, dashed to Harshi to personally assess the situation.

Further Revelations: In Yavatmal district the sordid affair grew murkier as police investigations revealed a complicated web of child abuse and adult intrigue. News of the original allegations against Mahakale and Rajne first broke when their colleague Bhadikar informed a group of Harshi villagers on March 9 that they had continually abused their young wards. Though swift village justice followed, a Pusad taluka advocate and journalist A. Aparwo Maind, who edits a weekly paper called the *Chawdi Varta*, informed the police circle inspector about the allegations. No formal complaint was registered for over a week.

Meanwhile Bhadikar, who had first instigated the villagers against the ashramshala superintendent and cook, made a similar complaint to Gajibe in Yavatmal, and the tribal welfare officer promptly visited Harshi to verify the charges. "At that time all 14 of the girls interviewed—two were not present—confirmed what Bhadikar had told me," said Gajibe, "so I went ahead and filed a police complaint against the two."

UNDER the more exacting interrogation of the police, however, the little girls broke down and stated that Bhadikar himself had constantly molested them since the past Diwali and had finally cajoled them to condemn the other two. Said Vasudev Potdar, deputy superintendent of police at Yavatmal: "Investigations are going on, so at this stage all we can say is that the girls now state that even Bhadikar used to molest them; so we have arrested him also. But the case has become considerably more complicated, since according to the medical examination none of the 16 girls has actually been raped. The doctor has stated that their hymens are intact and there are no visible signs of rape."

Depravity: But this is small consolation for the girls themselves. Subjected daily to harrowing questioning sessions for over a fortnight, the Harshi ashramshala's 16 girl students were last fortnight distraught with fear and worry about a crime which lay almost outside their comprehension. Rudely jerked out of their childhoods into an incomprehensible world of adult perversion and depravity, the group huddled in their miserable temporary school room, bursting into tears each time a stranger came in. Chandrakala, a pretty eight-year-old along with Ganga, an alleged favourite of Bhadikar's haltingly explained that the assistant teache frequently called his charges to his rooms a night to perform small chores for him, ofte seizing the opportunity to strip them off thei clothes and molest them.

"He used to call me to his *chulha* (kitchen) to do some work and then take off al my clothes and his own," said the young gir unselfconsciously, "and then he used to d things." Added Ganga: "Bhadikar used t call me at night and he used to touch m down there." Shobha, barely six and certainly unaware of the reasons for the furor around her, nevertheless adds to the astonishing charges of depravity. "Once he too me also to his room," she says, almost b

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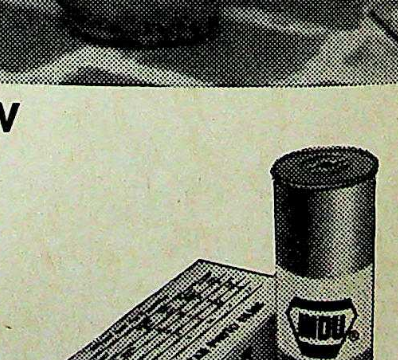

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amming up thereafter and refusing to ate on what was done to her. The harassed from days of questioning by ice, burst into tears each time they are about the incidents.

ruel Neglect: The testimony of the shala students notwithstanding, little ually known last fortnight about the of molestation, how long it had gone the exact involvement of each of the d. But the Harshi case raised several ons.

o women teachers or attendants were ed in the Harshi ashramshala even its 16 girls and 52 boys are all be- the ages of six and 10. The teacher's over his students is absolute, and sta- s by the young Adivasi girls make it hat they are frequently made to per- menial tasks and housework for the shala staff. Involvement of the villa- the children's welfare is almost non- t, possibly because it is a school for in a village dominated by non-tribals. al workers in the Pusad-Harshi area that even the funds allotted for the p of children are often diverted from shramshalas, and as a result their run- has become a high-stakes business d out as patronage by the ruling party. H. Atre, BJP worker from Pusad, out that only last fortnight the sanc- f an ashramshala for Pedhi village in mal's Mahagaon taluk was abruptly ed and handed over from Kuddus who was originally to have run it, to harrao Naik, brother of Maharashtra tion Minister Sudhakar Naik. Naik, already administers the Parvatibaji able Trust in Pusad, will set up the shala at Saathghari, a village next to "Even the running of something as ble as ashramshalas has become a ious thing to be handed out to favou- rsons," said Atre. "The Government of Rs 105 per student per month is an ive for persons to take up the running e schools."

ut Patil's Government last fortnight red determined to put the ashramshala e right; it pulled out all the stops to ly solve the Harshi and Nanza cases store confidence in the institutions. A official in the Tribal Welfare Ministry ted that "this scheme shows more po- l for tribal uplift through education perhaps all other welfare schemes put er". The official added that the Go- ent was trying to set things right. "I be the first to admit that it is at present om perfect," he said, "but ashramsha- the one way of encouraging the despe- poor to educate their children, and the s so far shows that it can easily be ex- d."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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TIHAR JAIL

Bonded Labour

ALL IT requires is for a jail official to get an unsuspecting, illiterate convict to put his thumb impression on a piece of paper and he is shunted over from simple imprisonment (SI) to performing rigorous duties that life-term convicts shrug to do. The exploitative racket utilising free convict labour as bonded labour has long flourished in the capital's central jail, Tihar.

Bringing the malpractice to light, *The Indian Express* charged in a hard-hitting exposé in January that the jail authorities were forcing a large number of able-bodied prisoners sentenced to SI to undergo lengthy domestic duties in the houses of jail officials or back-breaking tasks on the jail farm. As evidence the newspaper report cited several SI convicts' case histories. *Express* reporter Sudip Mazumdar claimed that the convicts had been compelled by jail authorities to sign papers testifying that they had voluntarily opted to "get my simple imprisonment changed to rigorous imprisonment (RI)"

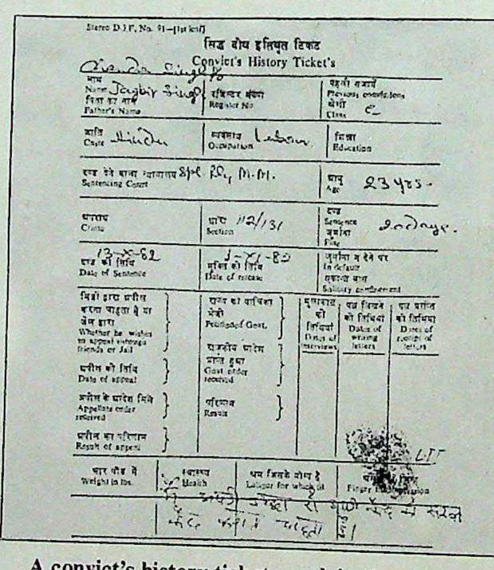
Justice Rajinder Sachar of the Delhi High Court reacted sharply to the alleged usurping of the court's authority by prison officials. In an unusual move, he issued a notice to the superintendent of the jail that a report of the persons mentioned in the newspaper item be produced. Said Sachar: "If true, this is a very serious matter. Jails are meant for judicial custody. It is only the court's right to impose simple or rigorous imprisonment. No person, even voluntarily, can convert his simple imprisonment into rigorous."

Flawed Explanation: Caught on the wrong foot the jail authorities tried at first to bluster through. Delhi Administration counsel T.J. Sodhi said the report was "malicious, incorrect and suspicious". His contention: the prisoners mentioned had voluntarily opted for the duty perhaps because they thought they could get sentence remissions. The flaw in his reasoning, however, is that all the case histories produced before the court are instances of SI being converted to rigorous for convicts sentenced to a term of less than three months. Under the rules, prisoners with such short terms are not entitled to any remission in sentence.

The other explanation prison authorities give for this practice is that the lure of extra rations motivated the convicts to choose to toil away their time in prison. An explanation, that is not very convincing either, considering the difference in ration supply to the two categories is marginal. In any case Tihar authorities have yet to produce any documents to substantiate their claim of extra rations.

Ever since the court's intervention in January, fresh evidence of the murky goings-on behind the high brick wall of the jail complex are coming to light. In February, when Assistant Court Registrar, R.S. Chhabra, reporter Mazumdar and R.M. Tufail, an advocate for Citizens for Democracy visited Tihar, a letter signed by four juvenile prisoners was slipped to them. Through the letter, prisoners pleaded for help as they were being harassed and sexually exploited.

Moreover, the visitors were not permitted into the juvenile ward by the authorities on the grounds that it was not part of the court order. Later, Justice Sachar handed over the letter signed by the juvenile prisoners to the district judge for a separate investigation.



Convict's History Ticket's

Name Jagbir Singh

Class C

Caste Hindu

Occupation Labour

Age 23 yrs.

Section 112/131

Sentence 20 days.

Date of Sentence 13-XI-82

A convict's history ticket: exploitative racket

Investigation: In support of the "bonded labour case", the team brought back to the court several registers and case histories including three instances of SI having been converted to rigorous where even the formality of obtaining the prisoners' consent had not been secured. The signature of the jail official was considered enough. Last fortnight, a still more incriminating document was handed over to the court—a jail register, known in prison parlance as *barrack bandhi*, which reveals that the forced labour extended even to those under trial. Out of the 67 persons on duty in the kitchen, the register indicated at least 17 were undertrials.

Old Tihar hands admit privately that forcing labour from SI convicts is an age-old practice. While theoretically there should b more than enough manpower available fro the RI prisoners, in practice, most long-ter convicts are *dadas* who refuse to perform th back-breaking chores. Lifers automaticall become *nambardars*, a sort of secondar supervisor for the convicts. Jail authoritie have found it convenient to dupe the newco mers in jail to do the worst chores.

Jail Superintendent, R.S. Mathu firmly refutes all allegations of forced la bour. In his affidavit to the court, he maint ains: "The term 'bonded labour' implies th extraction of labour without any remunera tion and is totally irrelevant in the presen context. There was no intention or motive t change the sentence from SI to rigorous."

Defence: Added D.K. Das, inspecto general, prisons, keen to observe the letter o the law if not the spirit: "Entries made in th prisoners' tickets are not actually mean to usurp the powers of the court in an way but it appears that such a practic has been followed as a matter of cours since a very long time. There is no doubt however, that the language used by th jail officials on history tickets like 'simpl imprisonment converted into rigorou imprisonment' in many cases is nothin but incorrect, inappropriate and unfortu nate." Das said he had personally give instructions to use appropriate languag in such matters. The jail superintenden said that out of some 6,018 SI convict (between February 1982 and Februar 1983), only 417 had opted for hard la bour, which under the prison manual guidelines they were entitled to do.

To the jail authorities' claim that i was the lure of extra rations, medical die and a uniform that motivated the prisoners to opt for hard labour, Mazumda demanded in a counter-affidavit that jai authorities produce prison records to substantiate their claims. He points out that th ration differences are marginal increases i wheat and gram and medical diets, in an case, are given only on doctor's orders. Issuing a uniform is mandatory for all prisoners

Significantly the assistant registrar, i his report to the court, observed that during his visit to Tihar the assistant jail superintendent had informed him about a separate register which contained names and details o convicts whose SI had been converted to RI Later, the deputy superintendent told him that there was no such register.

Jail authorities will get a chance to defend themselves on April 22 when the next court hearing has been fixed. Meanwhile, with fingers crossed, the case is being watched by jail authorities throughout the country, since the court's final orders could well disrupt an age-old practice in several Indian prisons.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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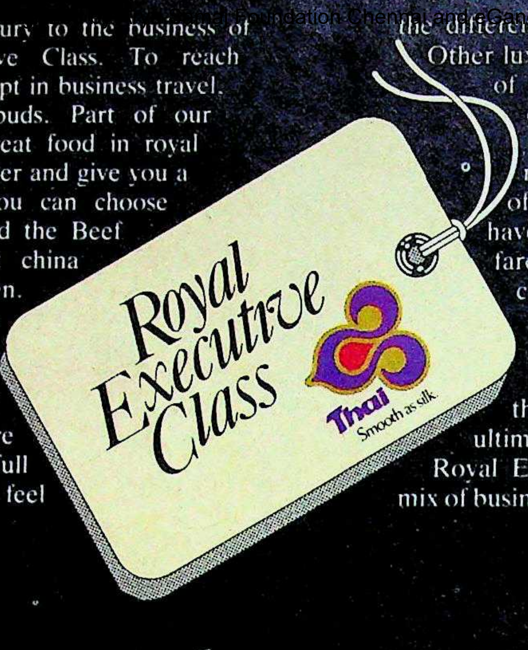
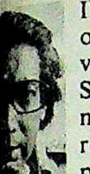


To reach your heart we've found a way through your taste-buds

LINTAS:(D) THAI.8

OVIET RELATIONS

hina's Second Long March



IN INTERNATIONAL relations, nations blow hot or cold according to their moods and the issues involved. Seldom have two powers blowed so lightly as the Soviet Union and China have been doing in their seemingly endless "consultations". After the second round in March, neither side would indulge in the pleasure of toasting an impending breakthrough. w, low profile of carefully rationed pronouncements appears, er, to be deceptive.

he Chinese and the Soviets may like the world to believe that ave just started a Long March to detente. Meanwhile, the Administration has initiated a broad reappraisal of Ameri- eign policy in the context of an approaching Sino-Soviet rap- ment. Harold Schaffer, deputy assistant secretary of state in of South Asian affairs, went to Beijing early in April, presu- to guage probable changes in China's attitude towards the problem in the light of the Sino-Soviet consultations. Even in ian foreign policy establishment, distinguished for its capacity bestir itself until shaken by critical explosions, there is evidence ispy attempt to think ahead on the f impact Sino-Soviet detente could on regional alignments in South and, more specifically, on India's ns with neighbours and super- s.

The Chinese leadership appears to have reached the conclusion that it is not in China's national interest to have "an excessive confrontation " with the USSR.

approchement: Detente between o communist giants is not exactly the corner. The talks have been icial"; they were held in a climate and serene"; "differences still ; the talks would be resumed in Bei- at the appropriate time": this is all he leader of the Chinese mission, Qichen, chose to give out upon his return to Beijing from ow. The Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, who met ian Qichen for 75 minutes before the latter's departure for Bei- was no more forthcoming. All that he could permit himself to his press conference in Moscow on April 2 was that the sphere of the talks was, in general, normal"; adding, with a p of Marxist-Leninist psychology, "we will live and see what e later on".

ee what? That unasked question drew forth from the Soviet 's newly appointed first deputy prime minister a more ntial piece of information: the Soviet Union has made some moves to improve its relations with China and will be waiting hinese responses.

Other, less authoritative but quite reliable, Soviet sources have n considerable light on the current phase of the consultations. ev Gelvsin, head of the China department in Moscow's Institute ental Studies, has identified six specific issues that dominate the He and other Soviet sources have also indicated where the two stand at the end of the March round of consultations:

erritory: There are no Chinese territorial claims on the USSR. is adequately confirmed in a long article in the maiden issue of *and the World*, inaugurating a series of English language publi- s by *Beijing Review*.)

order: There is a border dispute which is under negotiation. Chinese article referring to the above says that China wants a ment of the border on the basis of all existing treaties, equal and "unequal", while the Soviets wish the border to be settled more or less on the basis of "historical developments" and the line of actual defence.) Both sides have asked for a new border treaty. A noted Soviet analyst, Alexander Bovin, has written in *Izvestia*, the government daily, that the Soviets believe the border dispute can be settled "in a manner acceptable to both sides".

Troops Withdrawal: There's virtually no disagreement now on mutual withdrawal of troops, but apparently this cannot be accomplished on the ground without a broad agreement on the disputed border. The Soviet side appears to be flexible on the question of pulling out Russian troops from the Sino-Mongolian border.

Afghanistan: Chinese media continues to support the guerrilla movement. But references to the Soviet Union as "hegemonist" have declined. China is less interested now than in the past in seeing the Babrak Karmal regime replaced.

Kampuchea: A more difficult and complicated issue. China has begun to listen to the Soviet arguments. Tension over Kampuchea will not affect bilateral relations.

What is clear is that the talks now going on between Moscow and Beijing are wide-ranging, covering the entire gamut of their relationship. This indicates a mutual quest for detente, not just normalisation of bilateral relations. At the bilateral level, the March round of talks produced three sturdy accords: the first border trade agreement in 20 years (indicating that the border dispute is not a very serious problem any longer); the first accord in 20 years initiating Soviet technological help to modernize, repair or complete industrial plants built in the 1950s with Soviet assistance; and a trade agreement for 1983 seeking to quadruple the 1982 volume of trade which came to less than $500 million. A broad accord also seems to have been reached in principle on restoration of party-to-party relations.

Implications: It is not the normalisation of Sino-Soviet bilateral relations that bothers the United States and Japan; what does is the quest for detente which would mean the causing of realpolitical cleavages and might also lead to wide-ranging cooperation. This, in any case, is the view of some Japanese experts on international politics who understand the Chinese mood better than American Sinologists. Professor Mineo Nakajima of the Tokyo University centre for foreign studies believes, for instance, that the Sino-Soviet dialogue is just the "tip of the iceberg"; once the momentum is built up, bilateral ties could be improved to the point "where the two countries will restore an alliance similar to the one which existed in the fifties".

This particular strand of Japanese thinking is, of course, not shared by Americans, West Europeans and Indians. Perhaps not even by the Soviets and the Chinese themselves at the present stage of the talks. An interesting point to be made here is that while Chinese diplomats in New Delhi answer questions about the changing shape of Sino-Soviet relations with one monolithic sentence—"we believe relations will improve step by step"—there exists in the Soviet community some plurality of thinking. Some Soviets are more optimistic than others about the outcome of the talks; the less optimistic ones affirm that the Chinese negotiators are still not "fully realistic and pragmatic"

Whether they are or not, the Chinese leadership appears to have

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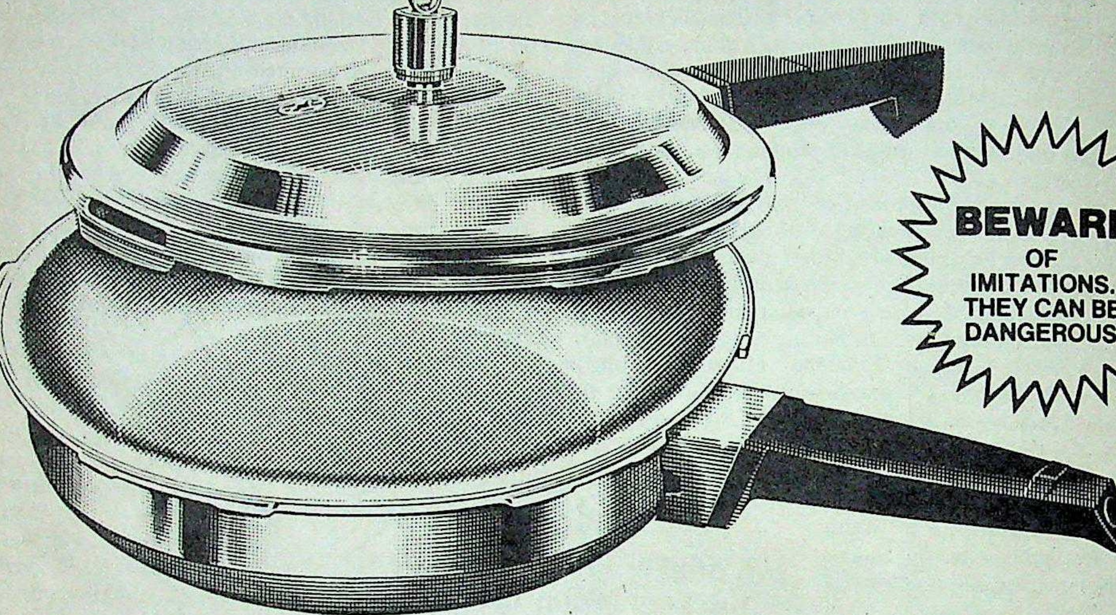

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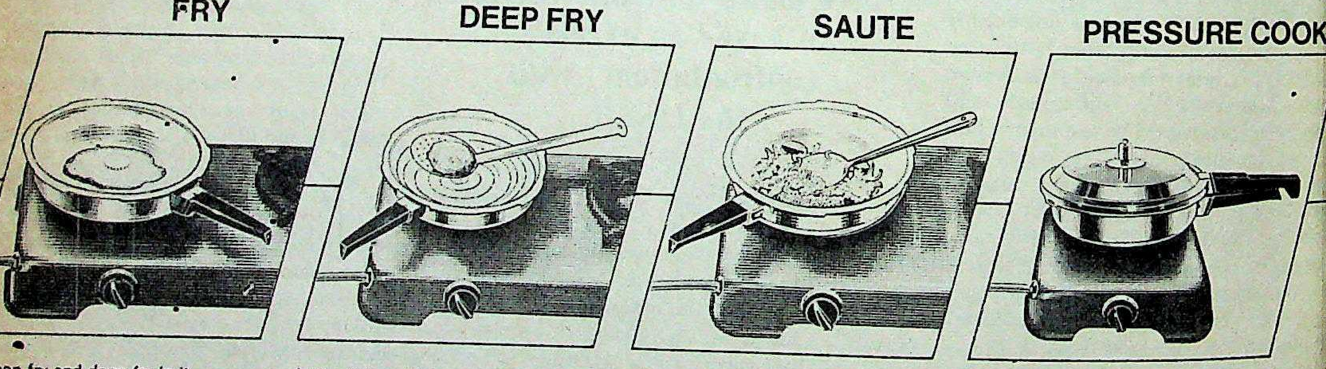

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e conclusion that it is not in China's national interest to excessive confrontation" with the USSR. "China's three s are economic reconstruction, national reunification e liberation of Taiwan, and opposition to hegemonism," to a "top secret" document written in the secretariat of the mmittee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

locument, which was secured by the Japanese foreign office shed in a major Tokyo daily along with Japan's official ion of it, went on to add: "Of the three, economic cons- the basic line because there can be no diplomacy without ng of strength, and to achieve independent, self-reliant , it is important to build up strength through economic on." The Japanese foreign office drew from the Chinese the conclusion that "Sino-Soviet rapprochement is not esture; both China and the Soviet Union regard it as mutu- cial and therefore it is highly likely that normalisation will not only in national but also in party relations".

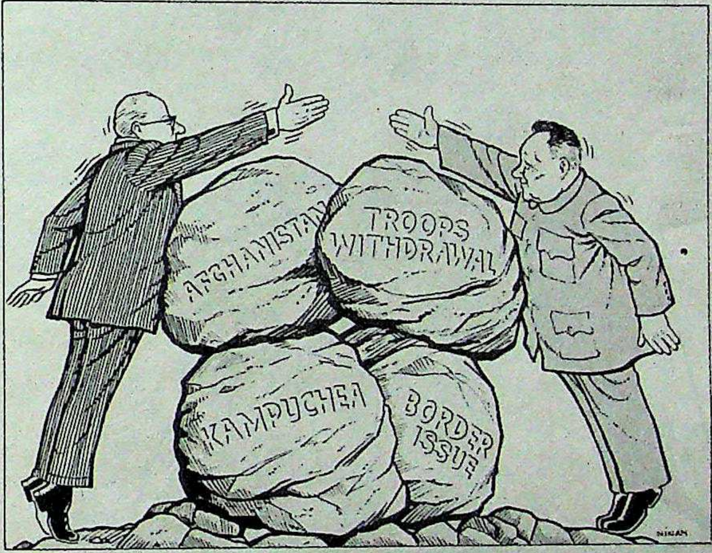
NA definitely cannot achieve its economic modernization get before the end of the century without cooperative sup- t from the Soviet bloc countries. Also, confrontation with is a drain on China's sources and does not he desired results. For support for the Viet- ilitary effort in Kam- osts the USSR any- ween $3 billion and $5 year. The Chinese believe that this is a hich Moscow cannot aring.

American experts have eat deal of computer ns to come to the con- at the strategic advan- Soviets have gained in st Asia more than te for what they may ng on Vietnam, which hin the limits of Soviet olicy investment capa- th time, therefore, the may be persuaded that settlement of the Kampuchean and Afghan issues without ltering the existing political framework may be more gainful nation than continued confrontation with Moscow.

that Moscow does not have its own incentive to meet the half-way. The main incentive is the totally negative stance of n Administration on arms control and detente. The Soviets have concluded that it is practically useless to talk about rms control with the Reagan Administration and that even Reagan does not live in the White House after January 20, policy would probably remain as hawkish and conservative s successor as it has been during his thunder-clapping y. Soviet foreign policy would therefore focus on uncoupl- ern Europe as much as possible from the United States and China away from its fledgling strategic relationship with on.

e latter task, the Soviets are being helped adequately by the Administration itself. The strategic glow has been dimmed relationship with China by President Reagan and his men. wants China's friendship on his own terms, which the are not prepared to agree to. Reagan has completely rever- Nixon-Kissinger tactical line: to use the China card to coax concessions from Moscow. Reagan's clear message to Beijing is: We don't need you to contain the Soviets; we can do that ourselves. The Taiwan issue is not the only thorn in the side of the 10-year-old Sino-US friendship; nor is the US refusal to sell sophisticated technology, specially nuclear technology, to China. Nor indeed the severe limitations put on the export of Chinese textiles to the US.

Repercussions: More important is the sum total of all these negatives: the new role in which China has cast itself in world affairs—an independent, self-reliant nation "for ever" belonging to the Third World. This role—the leading member of the South—must clash at a hundred points with the United States which, as leader of the world capitalist system in distress, is adopting a hard economic and financial line towards the South. The Chinese do not wish to stay equidistant from the superpowers. They want to have good relations with both, even as they have quarrels with both. They do care for their $5.5 billion trade (1982) with the US. They also want America to maintain a high military profile on a global scale in order to limit Soviet power which they believe is potentially stronger than American. The main point to note is that while China's differences with the US are widening, their differences with Moscow are steadily narrowing.



Once Sino-Soviet relations acquire the potentials of a lethal diplomatic missile, their impact will be felt all over the planet including South Asia. However, the impact will also be determined by change in the region: in Pakistan's relations with the USSR, political change in Pakistan and India, India's relations with the US. What is causing immediate concern to Washington is whether Beijing would put pressure on Pakistan to come to terms with Kabul and Moscow on the Afghan issue. Once Pakistan does so, its relations with the USSR would change from mild confrontation to friendly cooperation. How would that affect India's relations with Moscow?

One thing can be said with a measure of assurance: the Soviets will not change their time-tested friendship for India even if their relations with China turn glowingly better. Indo-Soviet friendship was born in an ambience of Sino-Soviet alliance; the Soviets would like to keep on the best possible terms with both Indian friends and Chinese allies (if such a situation does once again develop) or with Indian and Chinese friends. India's relations with Moscow would change if the rulers of India wish to change them. India may have to live with a good-neighbourly relationship between Pakistan and the USSR; once India's strategic cleavage with Pakistan is composed, India would not (or should not) mind Pakistan building friendly ties with the USSR.

But the economic ground is more slippery. If the current trends in India's external economic relations continue, ties with the West would expand and ties with the USSR and the Soviet bloc correspondingly shrink. The recent Indian "embargo" on trade with the USSR, the first in 25 years of friendship, is more than a straw in the wind. The Soviets could buy from China a lot of materials they have been buying from India. That would be a crippling blow to the Indian economy. If China begins to care for Soviet friendship, India must be all the more careful to maintain and strengthen its friendship with the Soviet Union.

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Damsels In Distress

TRAVEL brochures call it the 'Kashmir of Orissa', and with reason. Ghumsar Udayagiri (population: 8,000), is a picturesque little village, mostly of Adivasis and Harijans, tucked away in a remote, lush part of Orissa. But a pleasant climate and a profusion of green are not the only natural attractions of the village. For years, the beautiful women of Ghumsar Udayagiri have attracted petty officials and contractors, who purchase a 'wife', make a temporary home with her for a few months, and then leave the village for ever, abandoning the 'wife' to her fate. Lately, however, the women have taken up arms against this kind of exploitation. Last fortnight, Correspondent FARZAND AHMED *travelled to Ghumsar Udayagiri for a close look at the unrest and sexual exploitation in the valley of flowers. His report:*

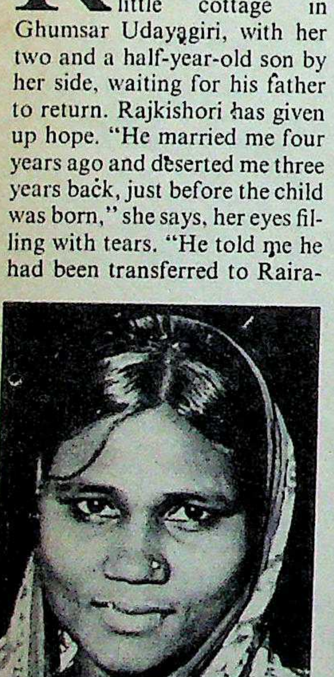
RAJKISHORI Achari is 18 years old. She sits outside her decaying little cottage in Ghumsar Udayagiri, with her two and a half-year-old son by her side, waiting for his father to return. Rajkishori has given up hope. "He married me four years ago and deserted me three years back, just before the child was born," she says, her eyes filling with tears. "He told me he had been transferred to Rairakhol (Sambalpur) and will take me there after finding suitable accommodation. He is yet to come. Now I feel cheated. I don't know what to do, where to go," she finishes, her head collapsing onto her knees.

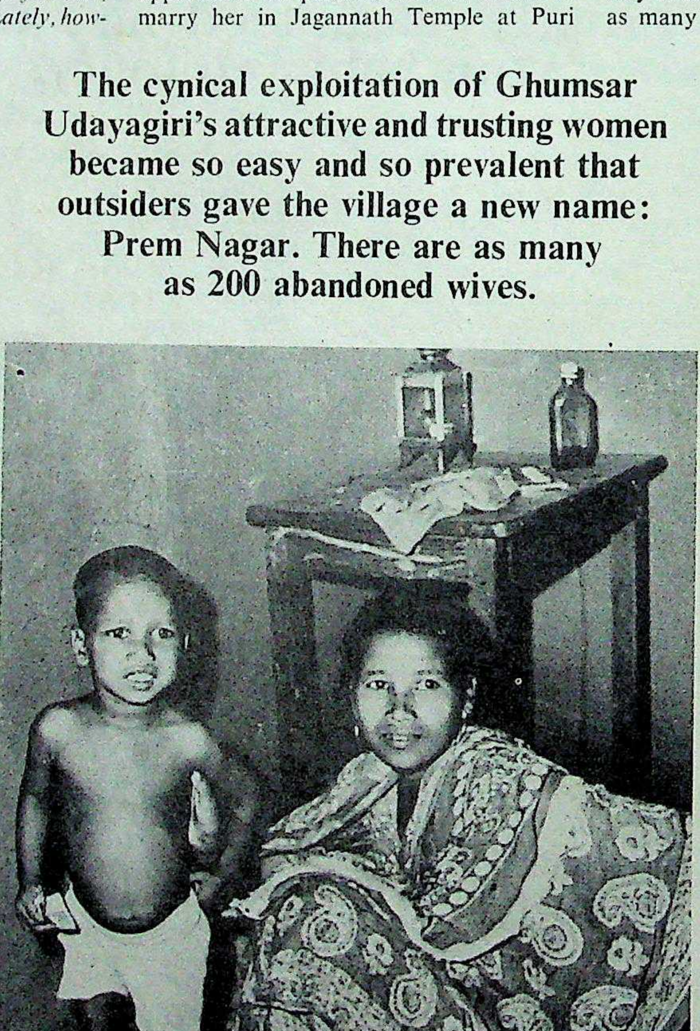
Rajkishori is just one of Ghumsar Udayagiri's many abandoned wives. Her husband, Harihar Sutra, was an Irrigation Department official who was transferred to the valley. Before long, he began searching for a "local wife", saw Rajkishori and approached her parents. He even offered to marry her in Jagannath Temple at Puri instead of going through the simple customs. A few months later Sutra ha the village, leaving his distraught wif painful memories of an all too brief w life.

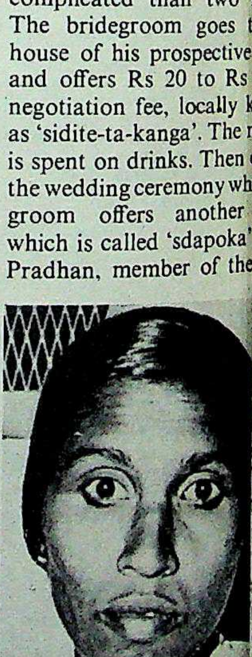
The same story is told again and The cynical exploitation of Gh Udayagiri's attractive and trusting w became so easy and so prevalent that ders gave Ghumsar Udayagiri a new Prem Nagar. According to Saudamini, tary of the Nari Sangharsh Samiti, the as many as 200 abandoned wives. " kind of marriages are still on," she says. "This is th come of beauty combinec poverty." Hemanta Nay Yuvak Sangharsh Samit vist agrees: "About 90 pe of the poor families are e ted by petty officials, ma and contractors."

What makes this ex tion so easy is that the ma ritual is hinged on nothing complicated than two The bridegroom goes house of his prospective and offers Rs 20 to Rs negotiation fee, locally k as 'sidite-ta-kanga'. The is spent on drinks. Then the wedding ceremony wh groom offers another which is called 'sdapoka' Pradhan, member of the

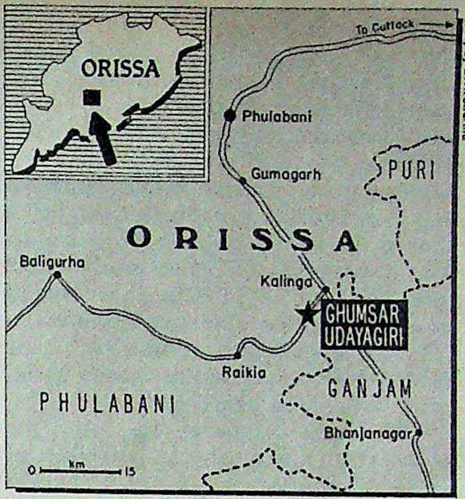
The cynical exploitation of Ghumsar Udayagiri's attractive and trusting women became so easy and so prevalent that outsiders gave the village a new name: Prem Nagar. There are as many as 200 abandoned wives.







Victims of exploitation: Subhadra Pradhan (left), Rajkishori Achari and son and Jyotsana Nayak



arsh Samiti explains the modus oper- "The outsiders first offer jobs to the girls, show deep interest in their family and gradually gain their confidence." ger sums it up: "Being simple, the girls heir parents take it seriously and are d every time."

Primitive People: The problem, local feel, stems from the socio-cultural of the area. Since the valley was over- with dense green jungles and locked in ocks, its people remained primitive for ies. Till a few decades back, women of llage went around naked. Eventually, ation arrived in Ghumsar Udayagiri. ed, the tribal Khondas tried to fight he Maratha and the British who were ted to their womenfolk. The local the Bhanjraja realised asy it was to acquire an agiri woman.

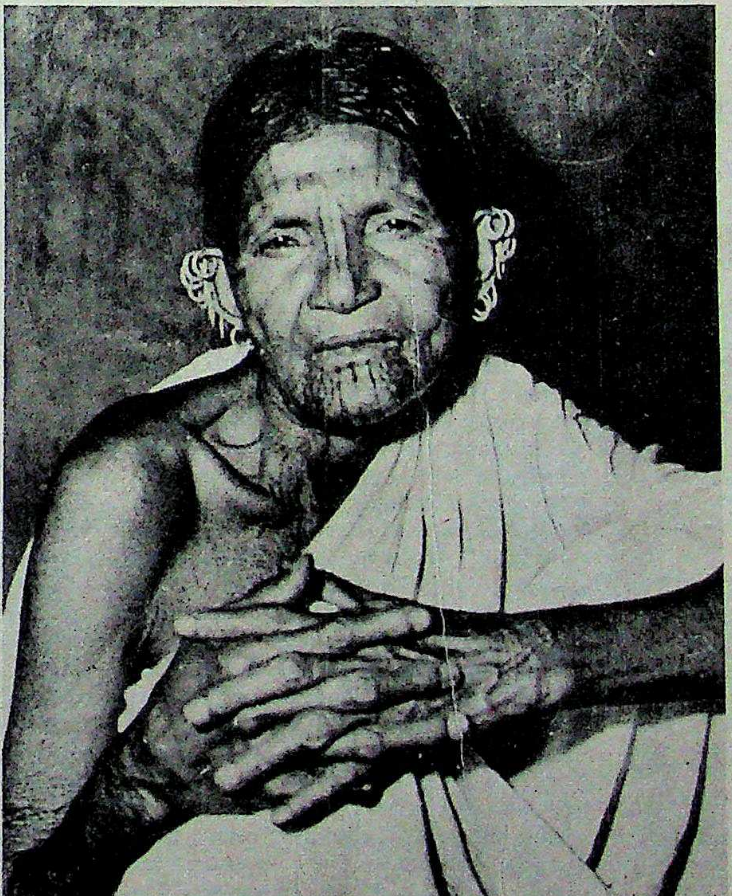
he sexual abuse increased ch that frightened parents d a method to make their gly. They would totemise es of their daughters with needles and weapons. beautiful girls were disfi- Then, some 25 to 30 ago, the exploitation again. Petty officials di- red that there was one that would keep the warli- bals under control and them free to enjoy the k: liquor.

he Khondas loved liquor quor they were given. The g law only made things for the exploiters. Under n 92 of the Bihar-Orissa Act, an Adivasi family stil and keep up to five of country liquor for per- consumption. "Alcohol is ain cause for the plight of omen here," says Sauda- "Our male members, the influence of liquor, work and it is the women, y the young girls, who go search of jobs and fall rey to officials. The police help and the excise people listen."

Continuing Abuse: What is anybody trying to resist ploitation is harassed and hed by the all-powerful officials. Mahendra k, for instance, became a of the carnality of the tehsildar. Nayak, a midd- d man, was employed in overnment office. He has a wife and a pretty 16-year-old daughter, Babita. The ageing tehsildar decided one day that he wanted to "marry" Babita. Nayak refused.

What followed was a typical Ghumsar Udayagiri tale of horror. Nayak's wife tells the story: "One day the tehsildar called me and suggested that, if my husband was to stay in service, we should agree to his proposal to marry Babita. I too turned down the offer. He then started threatening and harassing my husband and ordered his transfer to a far away place. Taking advantage of our helplessness, he started visiting my house and then made several attempts to rape Babita but could not succeed." "Finally, my husband was sacked from service," said the wretched woman.

The sexual abuse increased so much that frightened parents devised a method to make their girls ugly. They would totemise the faces of their daughters with sharp needles and weapons. Many beautiful girls were disfigured.



An old lady who was totemised when she was young

TWO YEARS ago, the women and students of Ghumsar Udayagiri decided to fight it out, unwilling to take the exploitation any longer. They formed the Nari Sangharsh Samiti, the Yuvak Sangharsh Samiti and the Chhatra Sangarsh Samiti, which came together in a joint movement. On November 13, 1981, the women demonstrated before Orissa Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik and submitted a nine-page memorandum demanding relief and immediate measures to check sexual exploitation. The chief minister, apparently moved by their plight, ordered that Rs 100 each be paid to seven of the deserted women. This meagre sum was paid only after a year when yet another agitation was launched. Local people remember that Patnaik followed up his largesse by touring the area on December 11, 1981 during which he received another memorandum which was also signed by some MLA's.

The plight of the women and the story of their exploitation had spread outside the picturesque valley. In February 1982, some tribal women came to the state Assembly to demand the attention of the house and hand over another memorandum. Also, 17 tribal MLA's, including a tribal deputy minister, requested the Government to order a high-level committee to inquire into the problem. Nothing came of this.

The agitation, however was resented by the exploiters

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According to agitation leaders, the contractors and petty officials decided to punish them. Hemanta, one of the movement's activists, remembers the time when a hunger strike was organised against the officials in Ghumsar Udayagiri, who lost no time in retaliating. "My younger brother Samanta was soon rounded up on forgery charges although he was illiterate," says Hemanta. "He was severely beaten up in the police lock-up on April 15, 1982 and then sent to hospital from where he was forwarded to jail. Two months later, on June 14, he was dead. We protested and demanded an inquiry but nothing happened."

Backlash: Samanta was also the nephew of Maka Nayak, president of Ghumsar Mahila Sangathan. "Samanta was killed because he was related to us," adds Maka who has been a prominent figure in the struggle against sexual exploitation and the increased liquor consumption by men, which she says is part of the conspiracy. "The number of liquor shops in the area has multiplied seven times since we started our movement," she says bitterly. "This is the answer to our problem by the Government."

The wave of indignation and protest, however, does not appear to have shaken local officials out of their stupor.

Teja Pradhan (left) and Maka Nayak: crusading for justice

Samanta's unexplained death was followed by the mysterious death of another young man, Rabindra Nayak, in December last year. His widow, Jyotsana, remembers the night of December 26: "Some policemen came in a jeep and knocked on our doors. They took my husband to Raikia police station though there was no charge pending against him. He was severely beaten there and later died but his body was hung from a tree to make it look like a suicide case. The post-mortem examination conducted hurriedly confirmed the police version. But the people protested and 17 days later anot post-mortem was conducted and chemi tests done by a doctor from Cuttack show that the death was not due to hanging tried to file an FIR with Ghumsar Udayag police, which was not entertained. The G vernment, however, took action against t guilty police officer of Raikia and a crimin case was launched." But Jyotsana was n spared. Recently a case of land encroac ment was filed against her.

The crack-down is multi-pronged a merciless. Everybody who is in the mov ment is being picked up one by one. Deep Bahera, 15, a student leader, was arrested August on false charges, taken to court handcuffs and then denied admission college. Lately, warrants of a rest have been issued agai Hemanta and Maka.

Demands: Prema Sheel vice-president of the Mahi Sangathan, sums up the reas for the harassment: "Our fa is that we are demanding th all the officials who married o girls should be found out a forced to accept them as the wives. If they decline, th should be suspended and arre ted. Drastic action should taken to check the sale of alc hol and all the children of suc deserted women should be reh bilitated and steps taken check such marriages."

The agitation leaders al allege that in order to secu food for the exploited wome they applied for loans to sta cottage industries. They sa that they were told by the i dustrial promotion officials that "as long we are in the Sangathan we will not g loans".

The wave of indignation and prote however, does not appear to have shak local officials out of their stupor. The attitude is summed up by the words of Um Shankar Patnaik, the officer in charge Ghumsar Udayagiri police station: "I ha been here for the past one year and I have n heard of such things now. How cou such exploitation take place now? T Nari Sangharsh Samiti is unnecessari blowing up the so called exploitation in an issue."

Patnaik does not agree that the rate alcohol consumption is too high. He finish with a comment that exemplifies the attitu of the powers that be: "By the time I joine here the tchsildar against whom a lot allegations had been made was transferre And the present one is too old to indulge rape."

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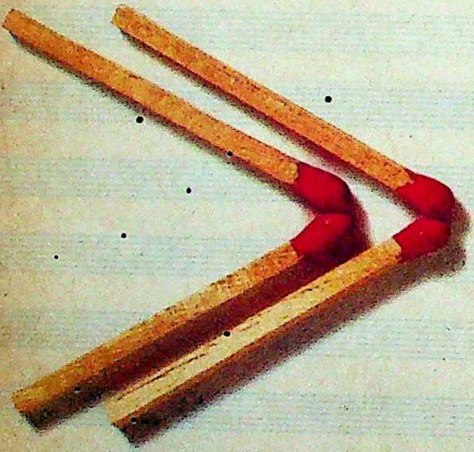

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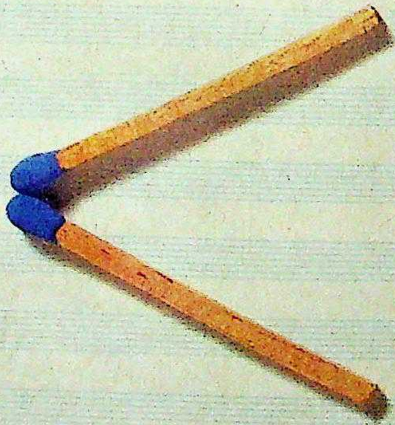

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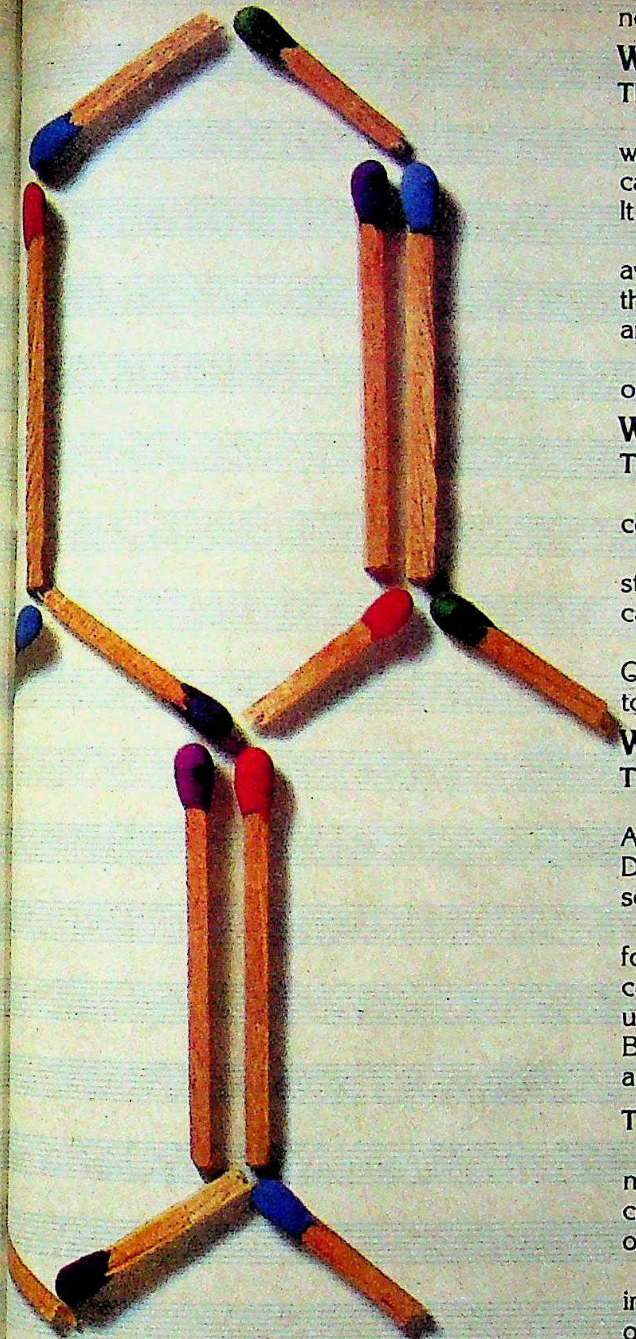

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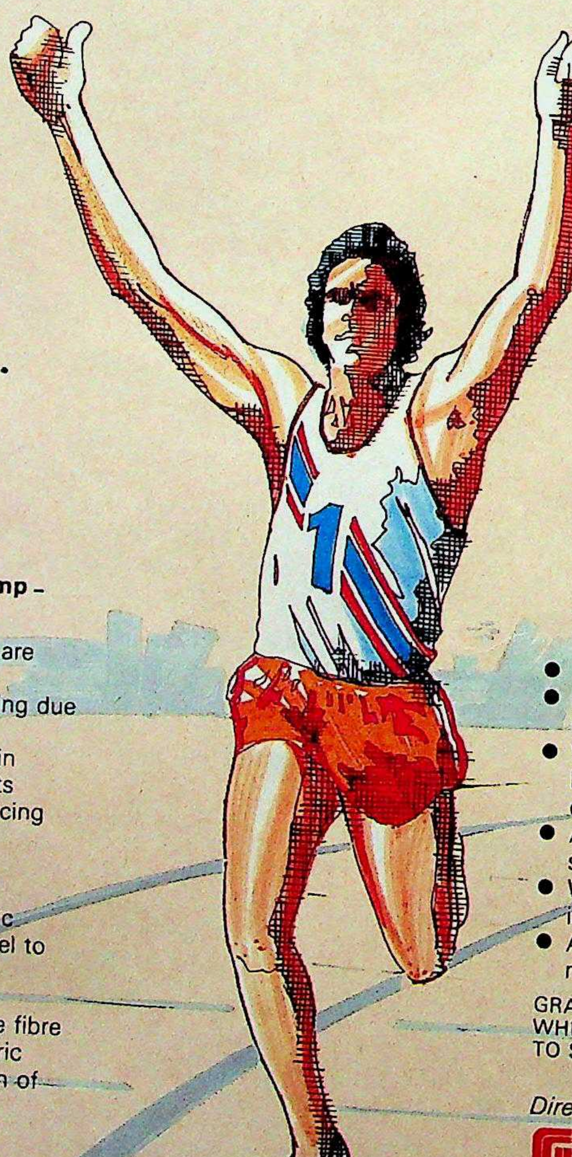

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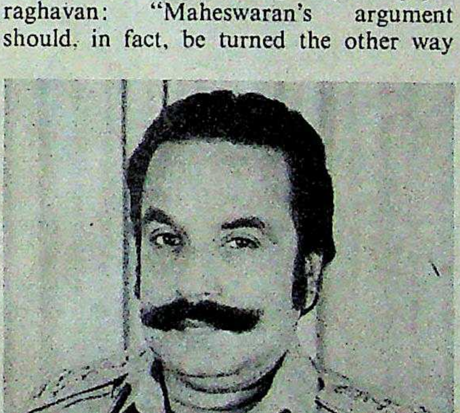
he Right To Know

HE POLICE in Tamil Nadu enjoy dvantages denied to their brethren in other states. They do not, for ins- have to show the First Information (FIR), the document that kicks off an gation to the potential accused. Last ht this was brought into sharp focus Justice V. Ramaswami of the Madras Court said: "There are over 1.5 lakh d against whom the police are yet to rge-sheets. Most of them are kept on ooks for nearly three years." Ramas- made this comment after the Tamil Criminal Investigation Department ropped all charges against two mem- of the Madras-based organisation a seven-month investigation during they consistently denied them a copy FIR pending the framing of the char- et which was never filed.

he defendants, dancer Chandralekha ee-lance journalist Sadanand Menon, en charged with sedition (INDIA TODAY ber 30) and the premises of the three- half-year-old Skills, working on low- ommunication and media techniques, raided last August. No convincing s were given by the police for jettison- e case. Said a tight-lipped CID chief, tor General K. Mohandas: "These he standards of proof expected in the are strict and rigorous.... The police not be construed to have been predis- against Skills. It is just that we take up gation on a complaint and if we find cannot be strictly substantiated, we he charge. There is no question of an turn in this normal procedure."

ey Ruling: The legal precedent for the s actions is a ruling by Justice G. swaran of the Madras High Court dis- g the writ appeal of Muthusamy, an d in a criminal case in 1981. Dissenting an earlier single-judge ruling, Justice swaran's judgement drew a subtle tion between the FIR and the "full par- s of the offence" which are necessarily yed to a person arrested without a war- Said he: "The entire scheme of the al Procedure Code (CrPC) is that in- ation into an offence should necessari- kept confidential, and that copies of the the accused could be furnished only the charge-sheet is filed." He further sised that "the FIR contains, apart the crime the accused is stated to be of, details of witnesses, and there is in- ly the risk of witnesses being tampered n any criminal case."

Justice Ramaswami: sharp comments



Mohandas: unconvincing stand

The police have found it to their advantage to go by Justice Maheswaran's judgement which deviates from the accepted legal convention, where a single judge's differences with an earlier single-judge ruling are referred to a larger bench. Rethinking on the issue was, however, evident last fortnight when another judge, R. Pandian referred a batch of criminal petitions pleading for copies of FIR's to a larger bench. Said a young lawyer, Vijayaraghavan: "Maheswaran's argument should, in fact, be turned the other way round. When there is no provision in the CrPC specifically forbidding the production of the FIR to the accused, nothing should be taken to be wrong in it." Added senior advocate G. Ramaswamy: "The FIR is a statutory document, and not one to which anybody can claim privilege. Besides the FIR does not constitute substantive evidence in a case."

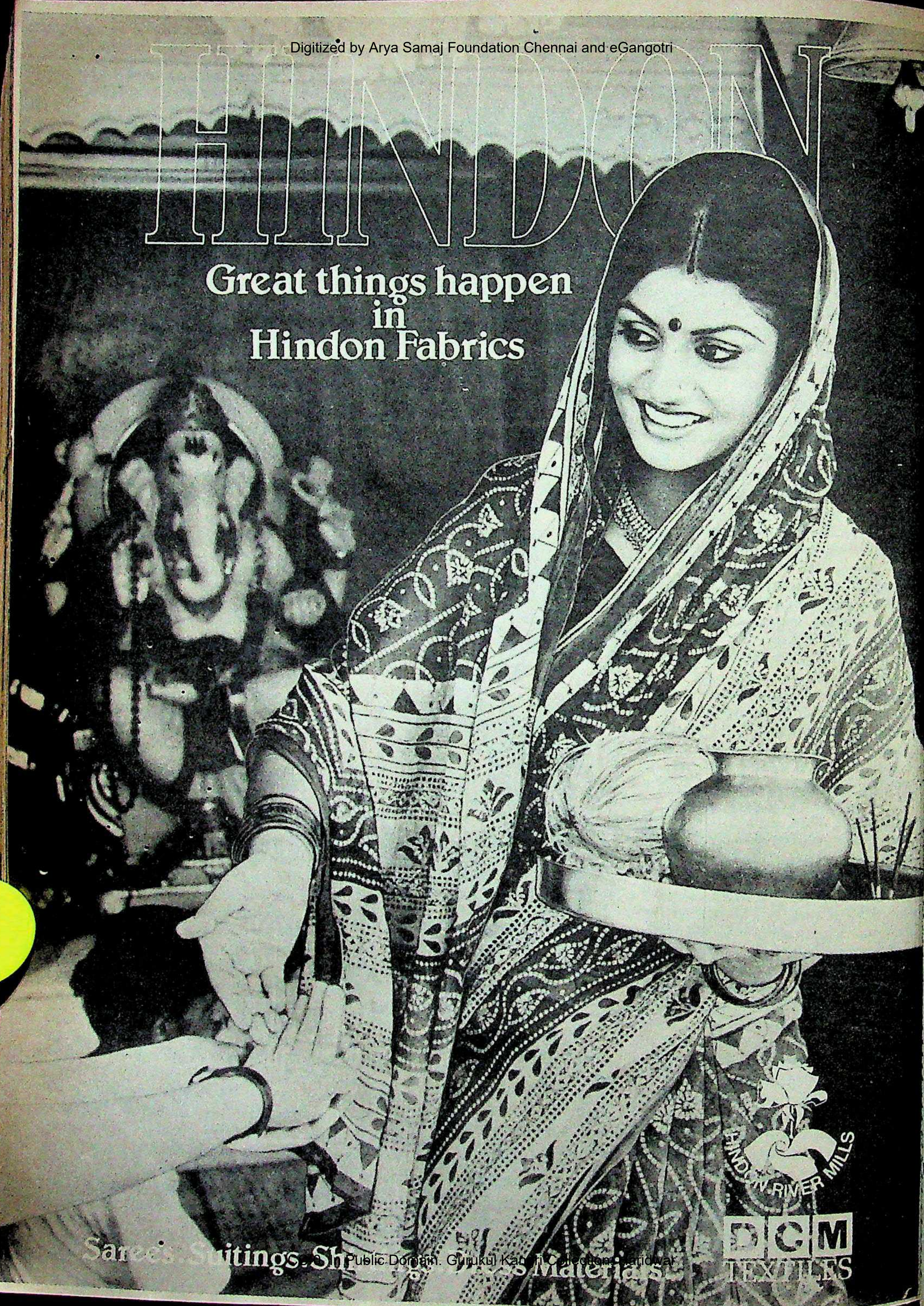
Already in the Madras High Court, Justice Ramaswami has strongly taken issue with the earlier judgement. While he did not criticise the police handling of the Skills case, the judge revealed that "the high court will soon be issuing directions to magistrates to send reminders every two months to the police in every criminal case to frame the charge-sheet. Because, according to Section 167(5) of the CrPC, if the police do not file the charge-sheet in a criminal case within six months of drafting the FIR, the magistrate can quash the FIR and direct that the police investigation be stopped." He, however, admitted that in exceptional cases of complex investigations, the magistrate could admit a police plea for a delay.

Justice Ramaswami also cited an earlier Supreme Court judgement which had implicitly upheld the right of the accused to be shown the FIR. The ruling had emphasised the right of aggrieved persons to stop mala fide police investigations through a writ petition to the high court, which would be impossible if the FIR were withheld from them. But the dangers of the defendant's ignorance of his suspected offence do not stop here. Vijayaraghavan points out that while Article 23 of the Constitution states that "no person, accused of any offence, could be compelled to be a witness against himself", a person might involuntarily end up giving evidence against himself.

Unconvincing: Replying to the barrage of charges, Inspector General Mohandas has sought to reduce the issue to "a problem of numbers", of increased work and inadequate personnel. He has countered the rampant delay in police investigations with the staggering backlog of court cases and writ petitions. Mohandas does not make much of the citizen's constitutional right to quash mala fide police investigation and his implicit entitlement to the FIR. Said he: "The investigating officer's right to investigate is supreme, and nobody can stop the investigation. If the investigation is mala fide, why cannot the accused represent the matter to the police itself, without dragging the issue to the courts?" He insists that both in this case or in the case of a false complaint to the police, "there is legal scope for retributive punitive action".

Unaware of their constitutional rights however, lakhs of accused in Tamil Nadu continue to patiently bear the police cross. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, one of the defending advocates in the Skills case, plans to shortly file a public interest writ petition in the Madras High Court to quash all the FIR's in Tamil Nadu that have been pending for more than six months. Said an approving Justice Ramaswami: "If the citizen has a constitutional right to a speedy trial, is no there automatically implied a corresponding obligation on the part of the police and the courts to expeditiously dispose of cases?"

—S.H. VENKATRAMAN



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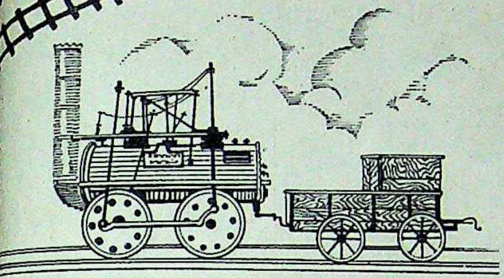

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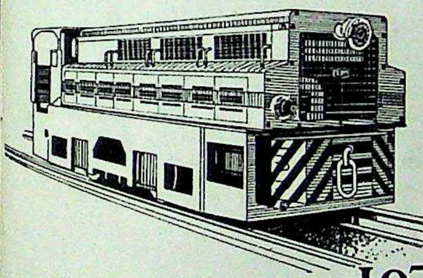

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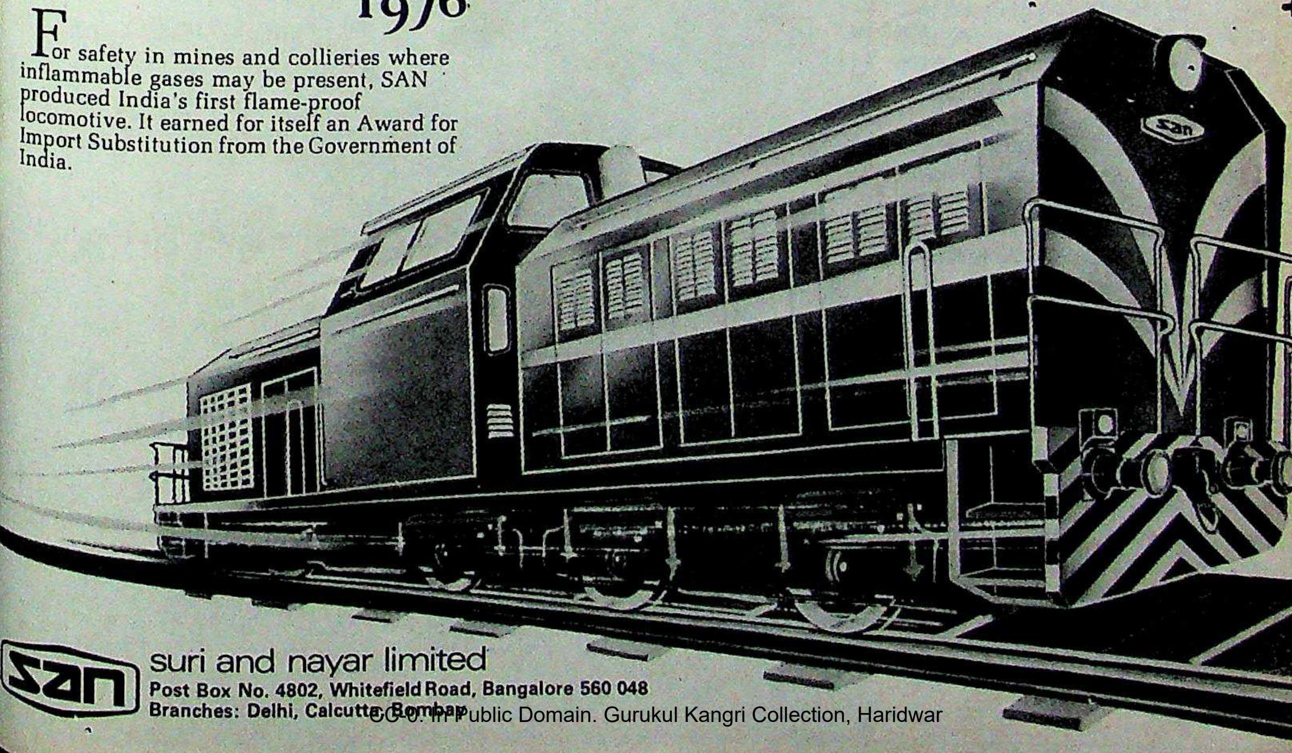

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RAJNEESH FOUNDATION

The Orego dy

ALMOST three years after the self-styled Bhagwan Rajneesh and his free-wheeling followers quit India, the controversies that have haunted them constantly still continue to dog their footsteps, even in the scrubby desert hills of Rajneeshpuram, Oregon. But if Rajneesh's chief aide, Ma Anand Sheela, 33, is to be believed when she drawls: "We love publicity—good or bad", the Rajneesh Foundation International (RFI) shouldn't worry. Right now they are getting all the publicity they could possibly want—most of it bad.

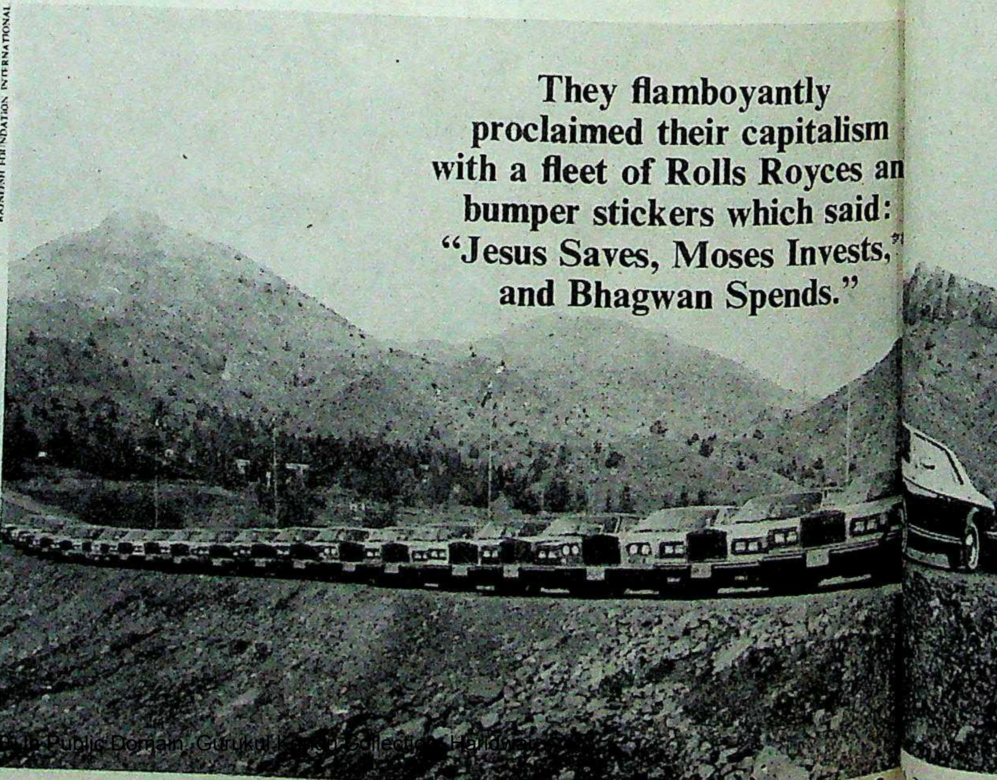
The foundation's propensity for generating negative waves surfaced almost immediately after Rajneesh, his fleet of 27 Rolls Royces and 800 of his saffron-draped acolytes halted their travelling commune in the tiny town of Antelope (population: 100) and virtually took it over. The initial resistance was only token. The small group of around 40 elderly and outraged Antelope citizens had little chance against the tightly-controlled and aggressively acquisitive sanyasins, as they prefer to be called. Using the commune as a base, RFI systematically bought up all the commercial property in Antelope and moved some of the sanyasins into the town—just enough to give them a voting majority. Their strategy was obvious. Come election time in Antelope, last November, and the sanyasins steam-rolled over the local candidates, putting five of their members on the city council while their candidate for mayor, Ma Prem Karuna, was elected virtually unopposed.

The events that marked the prelude to the elections clearly showed that the RFI was determined to stay on the top ten news charts. When they arrived at their 64,229-acre "Rancho Rajneesh" outside Antelope in July 1981, they professed to be merely a "friendly farming community". But Sheela's claim that "we are here to build consciousness and not a city" was rapidly belied. Flamboyantly proclaiming their capitalism with a fleet of Rolls Royces and bumper stickers which said: "Jesus Saves, Moses Invests and Bhagwan Spends", a head-on collision with the sleepy, conservative Oregon community was but inevitable.

Losing Battle: The Antelopians, heavily outnumbered and outgunned, took resort to every possible legal defence to try and stem the saffron tide but it was a losing battle. Prolonged and bitter court battles ended, most of which were won by the sanyasins.

RAJNEESH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

Sheela and Rajneesh entering the immigration office with attorneys : dogg



RAJNEESH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

They flamboyantly proclaimed their capitalism with a fleet of Rolls Royces an bumper stickers which said: "Jesus Saves, Moses Invests," and Bhagwan Spends."

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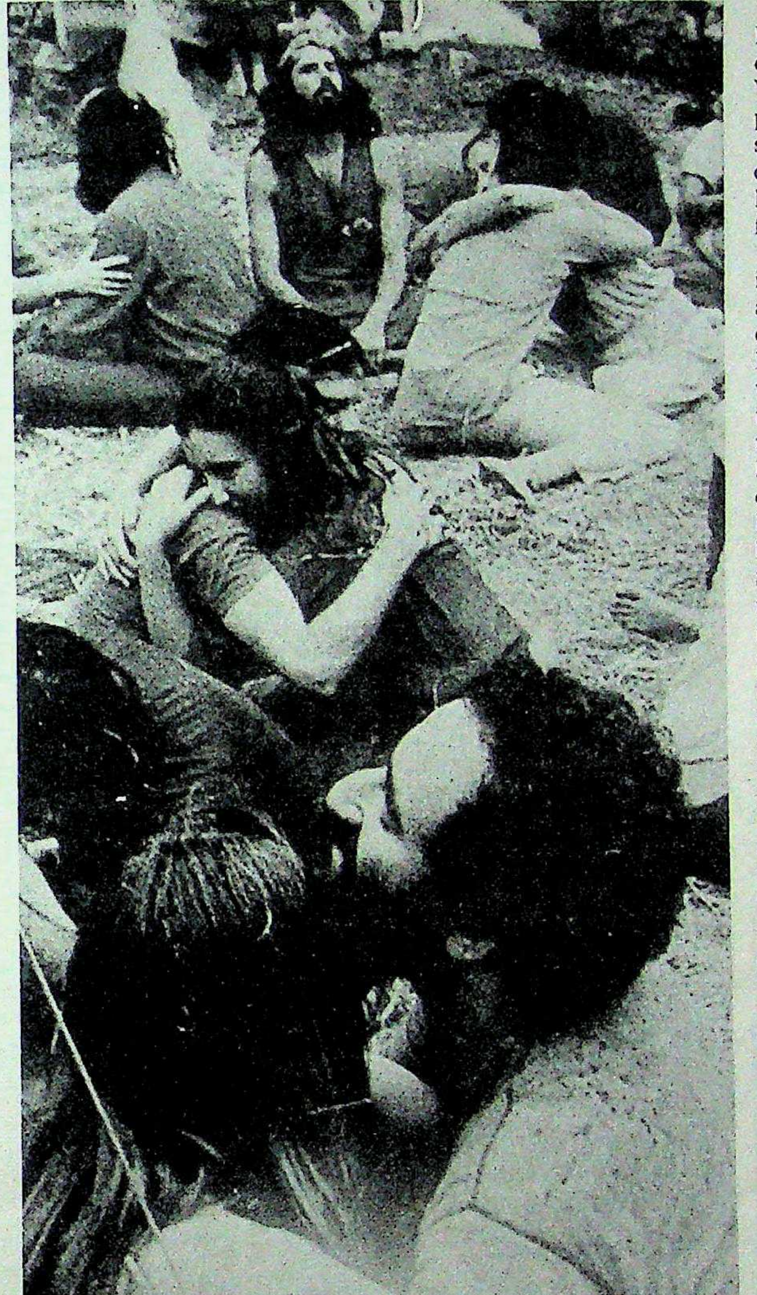


They have successfully managed to launder their image as sex-drug cultists. They still have "encounter groups" and as Sheela says in reply to a question: "Sex? Sure, we have lots of it."

Finally a large number of the original residents packed up and left, some, like Viola Wilson, selling their property to the interlopers. Those who remain, intend to keep a safe distance. Says Mona Reynolds, former city recorder for the council: "You have to live here to really understand what we're faced with."

The face of Antelope is now painted in the saffron that is Rajneesh's hallmark and a cafe called "Zorba The Buddha" dominates the tiny strip of houses. Quips Reynolds: "Everytime you look out of the window you see red." But that also signifies the constant state of war that exists between the local community and the Godman's followers. Says Francis Dickson: "There is no coexisting with them, no getting along." Lately, however, the hostility level seems to have dropped a few notches. Admits Don Smith, who stood for mayor opposite Karuna: "They call us rednecks and naive and maybe there has been some narrow-mindedness on our part." The result is that the battle is now confined to the odd skirmish like the one over the community church which the sanyasins, typically, want to acquire for a meditation centre. But even so, the Antelopians still sport constant reminders that the battle is not over in the form of buttons stating: "Keep Oregon Green" and "Better Dead than Red" while signboards defiantly proclaim: "This is Jesus Country."

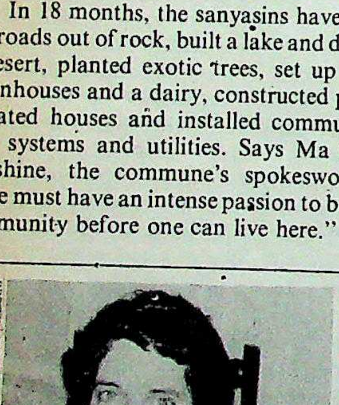
But there are others who are fairly impressed with the businesslike manner in which the sanyasins have developed Rajneeshpuram despite a court battle over its validity. In May 1982, the 800-odd sanyasins unanimously voted to incorporate about 2,100 acres of the ranch as a city to be called Rajneeshpuram. The move was promptly challenged in the court of appeals by a land-use watchdog group called "1000 Friends of Oregon". Says Attorney Mark Greenfield: "We feel that Rajneeshpuram is not the place to create a new city."

Their resistance is fuelled by fears tha the arid and hilly scrub land would not have enough water to support the city's projected population of 4,000. But the major apprehension is that the RFI is building an urba empire on their land under an agricultura guise. These fears are not unfounded. Th Rajneesh Investment Corporation, which handles the RFI's myriad business dealings owns all the land that the city stands on. I RFI loses the case filed by "1000 Friends o Oregon", the court could declare the cit unlawful and dissolve the organisational city structure which includes a mayor, Swami Krishna Deva, and a city council.

The saffron-robed settlers are well aware that their move into Antelope has been a major public relations fiasco. But it was a calculated risk, with ulterior motives. The state of Oregon has specific zoning laws which prohibit agricultural land being used for commercial purposes. So when the commune was set up on the largely agricultural "Rancho Rajneesh", there remained an urgent need to acquire an urban base for the Rajneesh Foundation's vast business enterprises.

Model City: The pace with which the sanyasins are rapidly developing Rajneeshpuram indicates that they are supremely confident of getting a favourable judgement. Mayor Deva has presented a comprehensive 20-year plan to the Land Conservation and Development Department (LC&D) which envisions a model self-sufficient community growing in harmony with the environment. Whether that will actually materialise remains to be seen but it is impossible to dispute the amazing achievements of the 800-odd sanyasins till now. They have turned the over-grazed low-grade ranch slopes into a flourishing farm and in the process won over local businessmen and county officials. Says Bob Rindy of the LC&D: "It is impressive how quickly and well a group of people can build."

In 18 months, the sanyasins have blasted roads out of rock, built a lake and dam in a desert, planted exotic trees, set up solar greenhouses and a dairy, constructed prefabricated houses and installed communication systems and utilities. Says Ma Prem Sunshine, the commune's spokeswoman: "One must have an intense passion to build a community before one can live here." That



ROHINI [illegible]ILEXANI

"We feel that Rajneeshpuram is not the place to create a new city."

—MARK GREENFIELD, attorney, 1000 Friends of Oregon

IMMIGRATION

Staying Power

RAJNEESH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

A pro-Rajneesh demonst

IN ADDITION to the many controversies generated by the Rajneeshees, they are now faced by the threat of deportation that hangs over the *raison d'être* of their religion, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Last fortnight, Owen Panner, a US district judge, dismissed the Acharya's complaint seeking intervention against the US Government's efforts to deport him. The judge ruled that court intervention at this stage would be premature as no administrative decision has yet been taken.

The fracas dates back to December 11, 1982, when the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) denied two petitions from the Bhagwan's attorneys, one for a visa in the religious worker category, the other for an adjustment of his visa status from visitor to immigrant. Bhagwan's attorneys appealed the decisions, claiming that no reasons were given for their denial. The INS, admitting a 'procedural error', reopened the cases and allowed the attorneys to file a rebuttal. Fearing, however, that matters might still be taken out of their hands, Bhagwan's lawyer, Swami Prem Niren, filed an action in the federal district court, claiming that the officials of the INS had acted "illegally and unconstitutionally". The federal court has still to decide whether it has jurisdiction over a case in which the INS has yet to take a decision. Meanwhile, further action by the INS has been stayed and the deportation halted.

Unpopular: The case received wide publicity and has since taken on emotional overtones, especially in Oregon. If public sentiment was the only judge, the silent guru would already have been out of the country. As it is, the INS is walking the tightrope between accusations of according special privileges to Rajneesh, and religious discrimination against him. Says Niren: "We do demand that Bhagwan be given his rights and that decisions be made on whatever criteria the law provides, not based on personal attitudes of the people who make those decisions."

To him, some of the INS explanations make little or no sense. On the one hand, they claim that Bhagwan lied about his health when he obtained a tourist visa for medical treatment in this country in June 1981; on the other, they say he is too ill to work. Again, they say that he does not qualify as a religious leader because of his self-imposed silence—a silence that has now lasted two years. Concludes Niren in cautious legalese: "It is true that the system is geared towards traditional and established western religion. If Jesus had come in when he was alive, with his little band of fishermen, he might have had a hard time satisfying the INS requirements."

Can the INS define what behaviour characterises a spiritual leader? It can hardly be denied that Rajneesh has inspired many, however unusual it may be. Mark Faust, believes that "the INS may be influenced a little by public opinion". But the sanyasins think it is more than that. Sheela, the only official spokeswoman for the Bhagwan, flung accusations at US Senator Mark Hatfield, and other politicians. The *Rajneesh Times*, Rajneeshpuram's weekly newspaper, carried a photocopy of a letter written by the senator to a Republican fund-raiser showing concern over Rajneeshee activities. The senator had said that the INS is "pursuing carefully an investigation of irregularities".

Adverse Reaction: Meanwhile Don Smith, a former Antelope resident openly admitted working with the INS and hopes for Bhagwan's deportation. Local newspapers have carried anonymous letters that urge a write-in campaign for the denial of his visa. The Jewish Federation Council and Board of Rabbis in California have urged the INS to deny a petition of permanent residency status to the leader of a "cult with a history of anti-semitism".

As for the INS, its officials are not

show of unity

vinced that Bhagwan came to the US ctly for medical treatment. Sheela re- ts: "The man had been told that he d but a few months to live." Rajneesh's esses are listed as severe allergies, enile diabetes, and an intervertebral c. Dismissing rumours about his sud- departure from India, she ruled out INS notion that Bhagwan had in- ded to emigrate: "He is such a spon- eous person, he could not take such a cision so far ahead of time." According her, the only things that convinced him seek residency were "the tears in my s and the love from his disciples".

The INS is, however, sceptical. Their tement provided to the attorneys, s: "In conclusion, it must be de- mined that at the time the applicant

Niren: Spirited defence

ceived his visitor's visa from the merican consul, he had the precon- ved intent to seek permanent residence on his arrival in the United States." e Rajneeshees have not been able to plain why so much money and prepara- n went into Rancho Rajneesh prior to Rajneesh's arrival and why some sanyasins had left India before he did. The INS will dwell on this question, but till then, every avenue open to the attorneys is being exploited. In a show of unified strength, Rajneesh organisations worldwide, mobilised their members to demonstrate peacefully against the INS.

Mystique: How is the Acharya himself affected by the uncertainty of his future? Says Sheela: "At this point it makes no difference to him at all." There is no way of penetrating the mystique built around the man but Niren mentioned that in his interview with INS officials, the Bhagwan broke his vow of silence to say that he had no desire to remain here other than to be with the sanyasins who have asked him to stay on.

The sanyasins do not, however, see much of their master. Bhagwan lives in a beautifully landscaped house, which has been provided with an indoor swimming pool. His mother, Ma Saraswati Jain, lives nearby. Also in the US for medical treatment, she too has an appeal pending with the INS for permanent residency.

According to Sheela, Bhagwan has a leisurely routine, driving, sitting or swimming for a few hours, besides conversing with her for some time. "In these sessions," she says, "he discusses the problems of meditation and growth of his disciples. He is least interested in business." Yet he is often present to inaugurate a new road or a power station on the ranch. "He is proud that his disciples are so creative," says Sheela.

Elusive Pressure: The disciples claim to be ever grateful for Bhagwan's presence among them. The only time they see him, however, is when he drives out each afternoon in one of the 27 Rolls Royces provided by them. They leave their work aside and line up along the dusty roads, a blazing red trail of silent devotees with folded hands and serene faces.

The older residents of Antelope and other locals catching an occasional glimpse of him in his fancy cars hope that the eccentric foreigner will soon be gone, along with his sanyasins. Says Don Smith: "I think that once Rajneesh goes, the ranch will deteriorate."

This is wishful thinking indeed. With over $40 million (Rs 40 crore) invested in Rancho Rajneesh, its residents are not going to leave, whatever be the outcome of the immigration case. Ever practical, Ma Prem Sunshine, spokeswoman for the commune, said: "If he left or died, it would not effect whether we live in Oregon or not. It is beautiful, though, for Bhagwan to see people manifesting his vision of life. Jesus was not so lucky."

passion is reflected in the cheerful commitment that the work groups display during their 12-hours-a-day seven days a week labour of love, living in groups in makeshift trailer homes, eating at a common dining hall and doubling up as cooks, construction engineers or accountants without any hierarchical hassles.

Predictably, outsiders and Antelope residents hint darkly at a core group that orchestrates the activity from the shadows. Sheela, as ranch mother and RFI president is undoubtedly the boss but apart from that the informal laid-back atmosphere makes it difficult to identify any type of hierarchichal structure. Says Don Smith: "The majority of them you never get to see unless they are pulled out for a demonstration." They have also successfully managed to launder their image as sex-drug cultists. They still have "encounter groups" and as Sheela says in reply to a question: "Sex? Sure, we have lots of it," but adding that the sheer physical involvement in building the ranch leaves little time or energy for much else. Drugs are taboo on the ranch and alcohol intake is limited. Up front they appear to be a healthy and intelligent lot, a majority of them Americans and Europeans from obviously affluent backgrounds.

Indian Followers: Despite its deep-rooted Indian connection, there are only about 15 Indians currently on the ranch. One of them is Divyagandha who arrived recently from India to join her American sanyasin husband. She says that the ranch reminds her of Mount Abu and she is perfectly happy with her mundane job in the video library and canteen. "I cannot express in words what Bhagwan has done for me," she says simply. Most of Rajneesh's Indian disciples are still at the Pune ashram which is still in operation, though the controversies and

ROHINI NILEKANI

"One must have an intense passion to build a community before one can live here."

—MA PREM SUNSHINE, spokeswoman for the commune

ROHINI NILEKANI
RAJNEESH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL
ZORBA BUDDHA

Sanyasins awaiting the daily darshan (left), Rajneesh on an afternoon drive and Zorba The Buddha cafe in Antelope

curiosity value has departed with the foreigners. Those who can afford to, fly out to Oregon for the yearly Guru Purnima festival celebrated each July at the ranch.

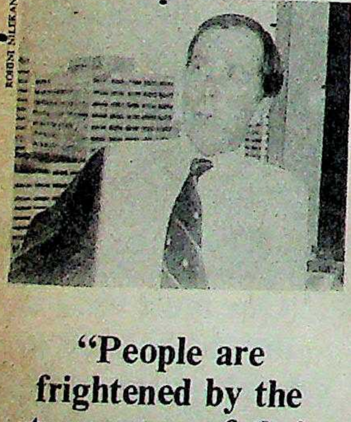
But inevitably, Rancho Rajneesh is no different from the Pune ashram as far as local hostility and suspicion is concerned, and it is not just confined to Antelope. Says Joan Precora, who works at a car rental agency in Portland: "You don't wear orange or red in Oregon. People immediately think you are a Rajneeshite." Attorney Mark Faust, host of a popular local TV talk show feels that most Oregonians are convinced that they are weirdos. "People are frightened by the strangeness of their religion," he remarks. The waves have even reached as far as the US Senate. The Rajneeshpuram newspaper *Rajneesh Times* recently printed a letter written by US Senator from Oregon, Mark Hatfield to Sol West, a California millionaire and a known Republican contributor. In the letter, Hatfield cites suggestions "about what local jurisdiction can do to slow and stop the financial enterprises of such cults". Such revelations have only strengthened the Rajneeshees' claim that they are being subjected to religious discrimination which they compare to "McCarthyism". In a recent statement, they claimed that they have been "unjustly and unfairly branded as a dangerous cult by bigoted and fearful politicians in Washington and are now suffering because of it".

Rapid Expansion: Suspicions regarding the group's activities have focussed on the rapid economic expansion undertaken by them. Having invested $40 million (Rs 40 crore) on the ranch last year, the group is now setting up several business enterprises. Rajneesh Investment Corporation (capital assets valued at $30 million or Rs 30 crore), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RFI, has recently purchased a hotel, a nightclub and a bakery in Portland. All this has put the RFI under close official scrutiny. Says Ma Prem Isabel: "We are under a big m
fying glass. The INS (Immigration and N
ralisation Service) and the Internal Re
Service are looking at us with much mo
re." Economic expansion is not the
issue worrying Oregonians, but politic
pansion as well. Many Oregonians are
convinced that the group's intentions
gradually take over the entire state.
State Representative Ted Calouri: "Th
a lot of concern about their perceived
tics—taking over a city and political sy
showing that by spending money one ca
what one wants to . . . ." And the Rajnees
are showing every intention of doing
that. Already they have made political f
outside Antelope and are trying for seat
the council of a city called, ironically eno
Madras. Says Rick Allen, a gas sta
owner in Madras who does good busi
with the group: "They are a friendly lot
cannot understand why they want a sea
the city council."

The Rajneeshees are evidently expan
their political influence with at least one
jective in mind—to try and stave off the
spect of Rajneesh being deported from
rica under immigration rules (*see*
Meanwhile, they are rapidly increasing
numbers (Sheela claims they receive bet
30 and 50 applications a day).

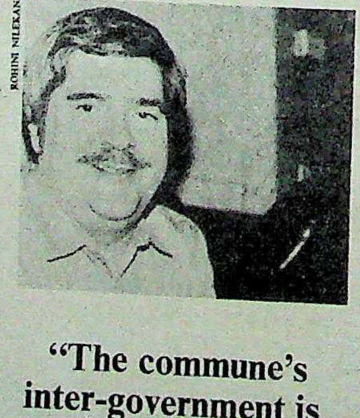
So far, the Rajneeshees have displ
considerable spunk and staying powe
fighting the odds against them and ther
definite signs that they are now being tre
with far more respect and sympathy
when they first arrived. Says State Re
sentative Mike McCraden: "The commu
inter-government is creative and well wi
the law. They are exercising their constitu
nal rights." And more and more people
coming round to Faust's view that: "A
as I'm concerned, if they have a city and
legal and they practise their religion,
what? That's America."

—ROHINI NILEKANI in Rajneeshpu



"People are frightened by the strangeness of their religion."

—MARK FAUST,
host of local TV show



"The commune's inter-government is creative and well within the law."

—MIKE McCRADEN,
state representative

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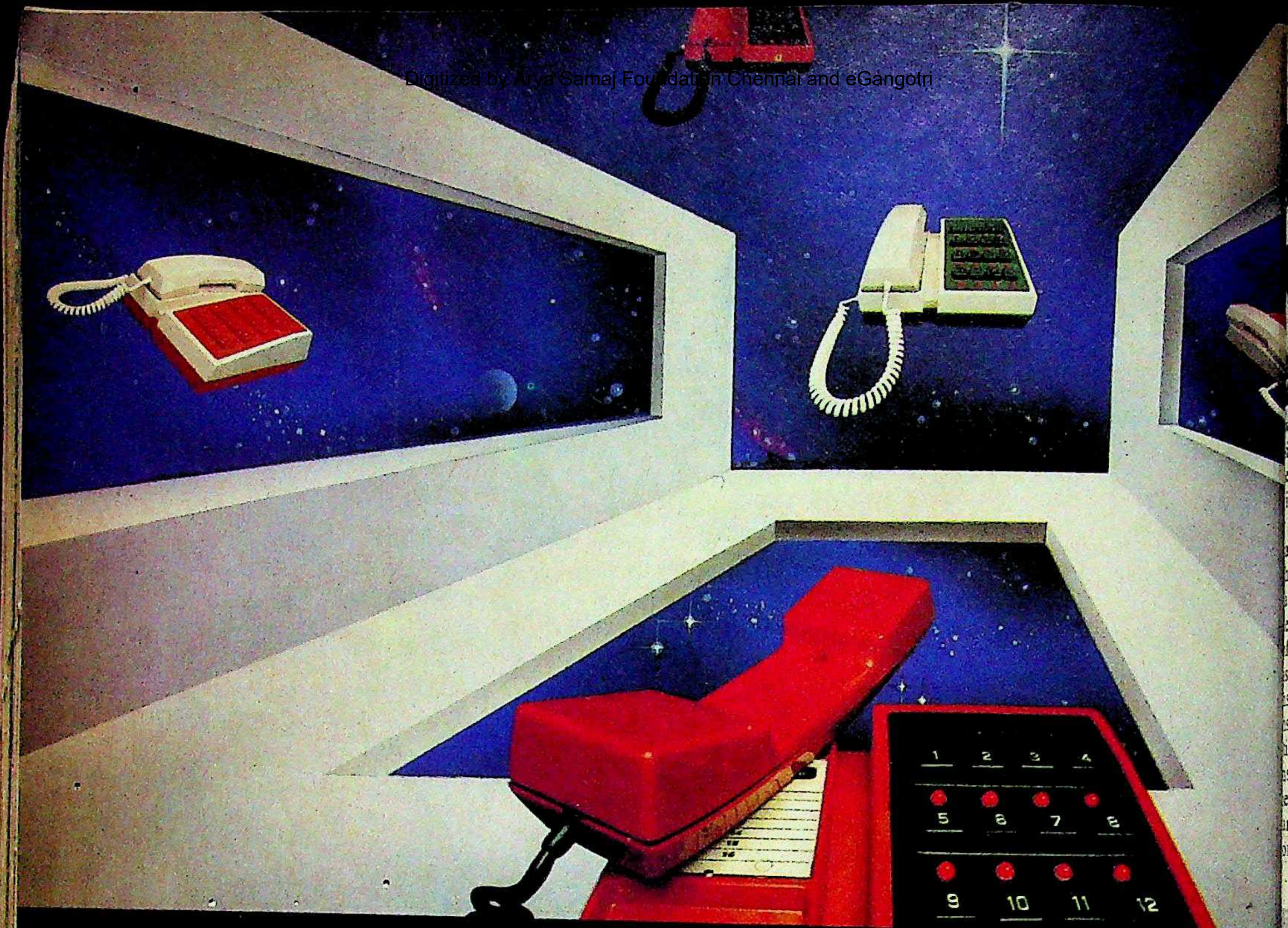

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luch Ado About Nothing

THE LATE celebrated American journalist and gadfly H.L. Mencken coined the term 'booboisie' to describe Americans who were ill-informed yet vociferously opinionated on every burning issue and subject of their time. The tempest that has arisen in Delhi from Ambassador K.R. Narayanan's Washington tea-party with a handful of Congressmen, at which as discussed, is a perfect example of the babble of the Indian ie.

flap over Narayanan's meeting on Capitol Hill is gratuis based on a miserable—and on the part of critics like K.K. M.L. Sondhi and Indrajit Gupta, inexcusable—misnding of the American Congress and its political system. e loud mouths in the Indian Parliament, and outside it, have remarkable flair for politics, they have also shown a contdisregard for civics. The attacks on Narayanan threaten to formal, independent and diplomatic activity in all Indian s abroad as well as set back small but significant breaks in Indo-US relations since Mrs Gandhi's US visit—breaks achieved not by pusillanimous apologies to justify India's ional positions but rather by assertive explanations of these s through quiet, informal diplomacy.

e Indian ambassador is being vilified and politically drawn rtered when he should really be applauded for a triumph of m diplomacy. By explaining Assam's torment at an informal gathering, to which powerful members of the House Foreign Relations Committee had been invited, Narayanan prevented the convening of a full-blown, public congressional hearing in which India's human rights record and Mrs Gandhi's handling of Assam would have been subjected to a relentless and merciless spotlight of international scrutiny.

Casual Meeting: In-depth interviews conducted by INDIA TODAY on Capitol Hill as well as with diplomatic sources revealed that Narayanan was neither "summoned" nor "deposed" nor "called" as is the general impression created by Indian newspaper accounts. He did not attend either an informal or formal "hearing". Even informal hearings which are closed to the public are mandatorily attended by stenographers and records are maintained. In this case, no stenographer was present. And it was a meeting neither of the House Foreign Relations Committee nor of the House Human Rights Subcommittee.

Meetings or hearings organised by committees and sub-committees are formally convened by their respective chairmen and are always billed as such. The proposal for the meeting that Narayanan attended came not from any member of Congress but from former Congressman Lester Wolf, who used to be chairman of the Foreign Affairs Asian Sub-committee and who is now considered to be one of the most effective and savviest of Washington lobbyists. Wolf, who consults with the Indian Embassy, told INDIA TODAY that because of "persistent and serious misunderstandings" on Capitol Hill about

Mrs Gandhi and Narayanan (to her right) during her visit to the US last year

The Indian ambassador is being vilified and politically drawn and quartered when he should really be applauded for a triumph of backroom diplomacy.

the Assam situation—"misunderstandings that were creating serious doubts about India and its government, I suggested that the ambassador talk to interested members of Congress on the issue, and he agreed".

Since this was not to be a formal committee or sub-committee affair, Wolf persuaded Congressman Gus Yatron of the Human Rights Sub-committee to invite Congressional colleagues to meet with Narayanan. Yatron wrote a "Dear Colleague" letter to all members of the Foreign Relations Committee saying that the ambassador had agreed to "afford members the opportunity to discuss human rights in India". It bears repeating that even though Yatron is with the Human Rights Sub-committee, he was acting in an individual capacity. A "Dear Colleague" letter is like an invitation to a tea party at which attendance is voluntary. It does not constitute the convening of an informal or formal committee meeting. In fact, Yatron himself did not attend the meeting. Those present were Congressmen Solarz, Dymally, Levine, Crockett and Weiss and six Congressional staff aides. Narayanan went with Chargé d' Affaires Sheel Haksar and Political Counsellor Siddhartha Singh and Wolf.

Free-wheeling Forum: The exercise was part and parcel of a continuing informal dialogue between Narayanan and members of Congress who can make and break American foreign policy initiatives. These conversations have occurred over the last two years at breakfast sessions, luncheon meetings, teas and dinners. Mrs Gandhi attended such meetings in Washington as did her special emissaries like L.K. Jha. The discussions are usually free-wheeling. "Most ambassadors in Washington vie with each other to be able to set up such informal dialogues," Wolf said, "and they're lucky if they can line up even a fistful of Congressmen to listen. I think it's a tribute to the Indian ambassador that he could line up not only so many Congressmen, but also the staff members who do most of the work. Ambassadors rarely get a chance to be heard by staff members. I think it's ridiculous to say that Mr Narayanan was called to the Hill for a grilling. If anything, the whole thing was a gesture of courtesy to the ambassador."

What choice did Narayanan have? To wring his hands and send frantic "Please Advise" cables to the Ministry of External Affairs mandarins, or to take advantage of the goodwill that he had so assiduously cultivated on Capitol Hill and seek an informal but influential forum in which to explain Assam in its proper perspective.

It is not in the least unusual for the US Congress to hold hearings or discuss what other nations consider to be their internal affairs. That's part of the nature of the Congressional beast. The US Congress is the most complex and gargantuan clearing-house of national and international information in the world. Its several hundred committees continuously hold hearings on subjects ranging from the sex life of the tsetse fly to Vietnamese slave labour in the USSR to the CIA's dirty tricks abroad to FBI misconduct at home to the Vatican's finances. Assam is no exception.

American Awareness: In recent months three major events have helped raise American consciousness about India: Mrs Gandhi's visit, the film *Gandhi* and the Assam massacres. But the goodwill among ordinary Americans toward India created by the political and celluloid Gandhis has been facing a serious challenge from the newspaper headlines on Assam. Perhaps Assam would not have drawn so much attention here had the film *Gandhi* not been playing to packed audiences in neighbourhood theatres all across the country. The contrast between the apostle of peace on screen and the demons of violence in Assam is too terrifying to go unnoticed by ordi Americans, to say nothing of the Congress.

Questions asked by ordinary people invariably filter back Congress. The most common reactions to Assam in this country What is the difference between Nellie and the Lebanese massa Did the Indian Government have any complicity in the slaughte its own citizens? Was the Indian Government involved? The m seeps into Congress. Members of Congress had begun—and s still continue—to raise the same doubts.

And here's where Assam becomes not only an international also an American concern. And with good reason. The real lever that India enjoys over Pakistan in the global diplomatic competi between the two countries is its good human rights record and its mocratic institutions. Indian democracy was repeatedly describe the common bond between India and the US during Mrs Gand visit here. It is the single most important factor that unites the India lobby in Congress and causes both the House and Senat challenge American arms aid to Pakistan. But the events in Ass have raised serious questions about Indian pluralism and democr here. Just as Congress has never hesitated to inquire into hu rights violations in Pakistan so, too, it would not hesitate to hold h rings on similar violations, if they occurred, in India.

Proper Perspective: A such hearing would be a dip matic disaster for India. Firs would serve to equate India Pakistan on the human rig issue. Second, the hear would be packed by Ass movement activists amid a Indian lobbyists. And si such hearings are formal pul affairs, no Indian diplor would testify on India's side

So what choice did Na yanan have? To wring his ha and send frantic "Please A vise" cables to the Ministry External Affairs mandarins, to take advantage of the goo will that he had so assiduou cultivated on Capitol Hill a seek an informal but influent forum in which to expl Assam in its proper perspective and thereby avoid a more emb rassing public spectacle at which India—at least formally—wou have no voice.

THE MOST trenchant—and accurate—criticism of Indi diplomats is that they eschew active lobbying and wooi They are either predictably pedantic with members of forei governments or they expect others to absorb India's point of view if by geopolitical osmosis. In his dealings with the American Con ress, Narayanan has bucked this orthodoxy. During the hour-lo meeting on the Hill, the Indian diplomat said nothing that was ter bly different from what he has been telling the American peop about Assam when he is interviewed by the press or television. A far from being the star chamber proceeding as portrayed in t Indian press, the meeting was cordial and friendly. Here is an eyew ness summary account of what transpired at the meeting:

Narayanan opened the discussion with a geography lesson Assam—the states' immigration patterns, population compositi —and traced the history of the Assam "movement" to the dema for the expulsion of "foreigners". He stressed that the Assam iss was not, as is popularly depicted, a Hindu-Muslim conflict. H

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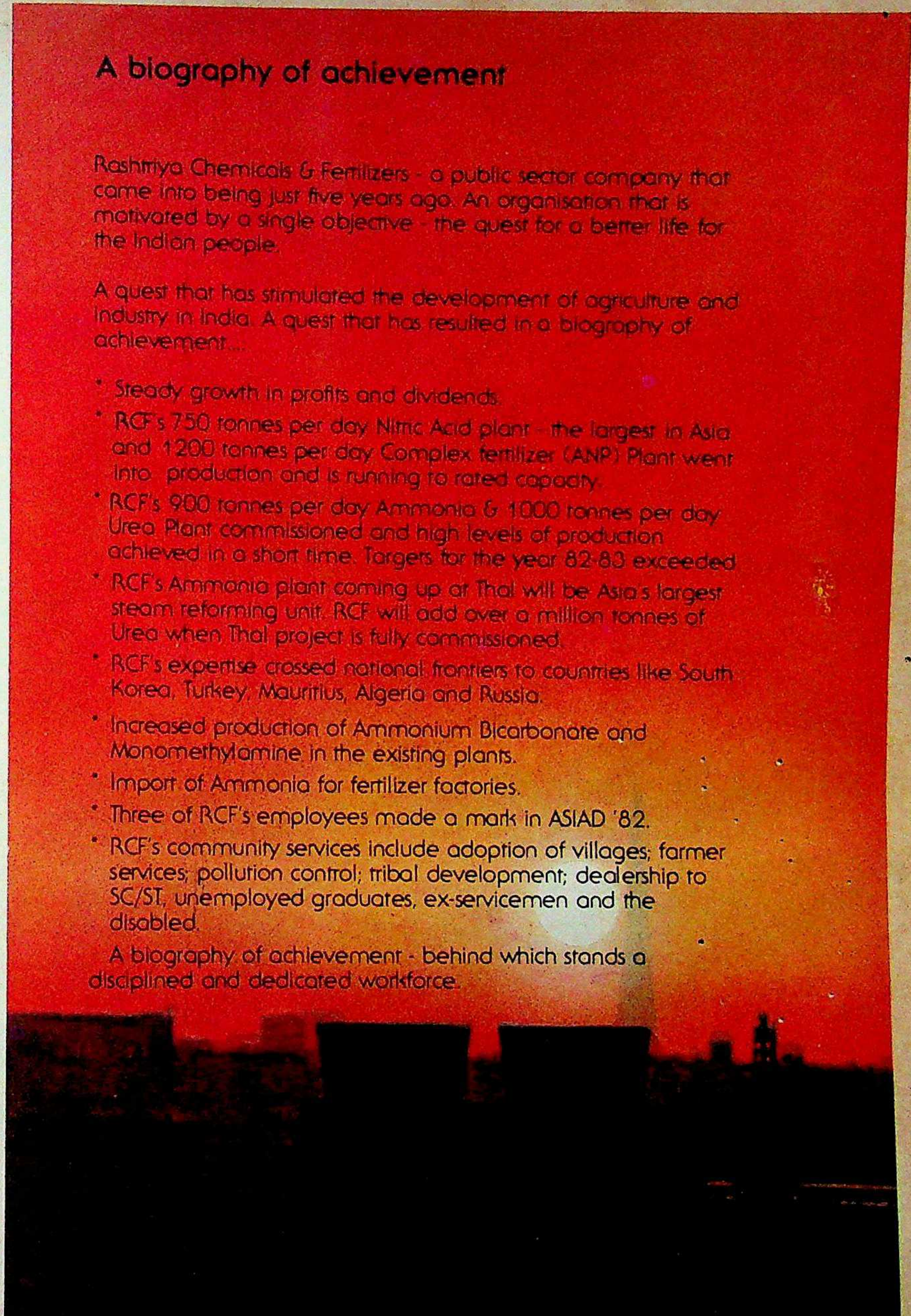

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- Increased production of Ammonium Bicarbonate and Monomethylamine in the existing plants.
- Import of Ammonia for fertilizer factories.
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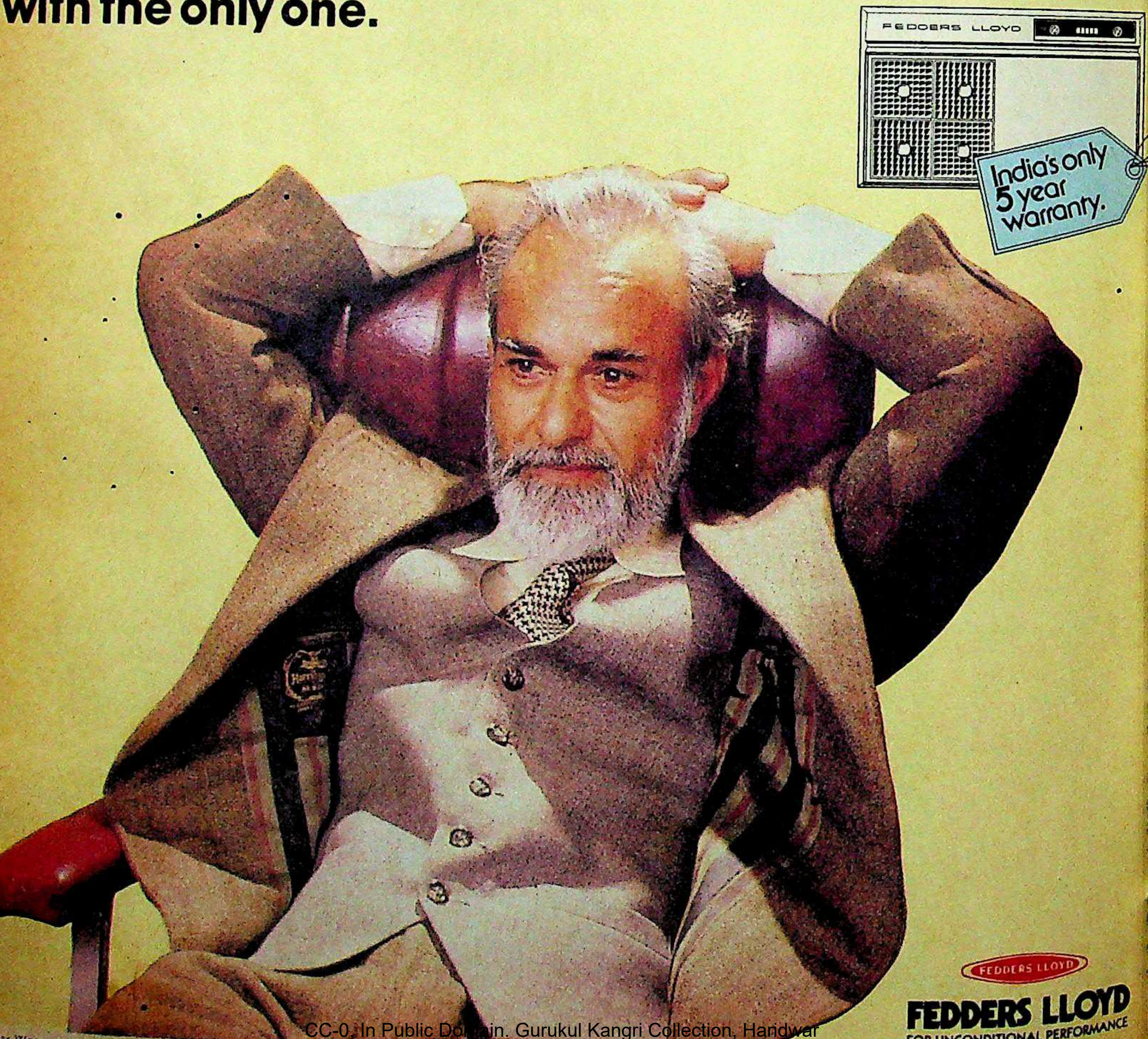

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d that neither the Central nor the state Government police were in any way involved in the massacre. And that it was ed upheaval stemming from a surcharged atmosphere in erybody turned on everybody else in sheer "madness".

ctions: Asked why there had been no speedier action, Na- pointed to the remoteness of the location, the suddenness of s and the disappearance of the killers. He also pointed out ty of appointing a judicial inquiry commission while the remained "highly disturbed". Congressman Solarz asked the Assam situation showed that India's democratic fabric gile". Narayanan pointed out that the recent racial riots in ere no fault of the state police and had been brought under "Is that a failure of democracy?" he asked. "Riots can ce even in a stable, affluent society."

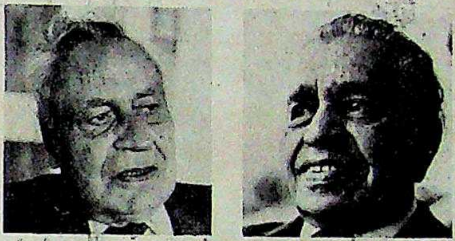
ld not the Indian Government anticipate trouble and roops in advance, Narayanan was asked. He replied that booths and stations were protected s. The army could not be deployed out the state because "there has to be ce between security measures and of elections". One member atten- meeting labelled Narayanan's per- e as "outstanding". And in a letter itor of *The Times of India*, Congress- l Levine, who hosted the meeting, e March 28 report on the meeting by s's Washington corres- "substantially in- ".

fficial Dialogue: Le- ointed out that the was held in response thoughtful initiative mbassador of India.... nvitations to the meet- ere issued by the n of the human the meeting was not a neeting of the sub-com- In fact, a majority of the s of Congress present t members of the sub- ee." Levine described ting as "private, unoffi- d completely routine ary to your report, in- meetings between ambassadors, other representatives of governments and members of Congress are relatively t. As a matter of record, Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi had eeting with the committee on July 29, 1982". Narayanan was with a "barrage of questions," Levine continued. "The meet- exceptionally polite and friendly. The ambassador invited s and some were asked. No suggestion was made by anyone eeting that the events in Assam resulted from the policies of ernment of India."

e Human Rights Sub-committee, Levine wrote, has in the ld hearings on Pakistan, South Korea, Philippines, and "The ambassadors of none of these countries were called it is contrary to custom to have a foreign ambassador testify gressional hearings. President Zia, President Marcos and aders such as Prime Minister Thatcher have all met infor- ith committee members." Levine concluded: "It certainly pe and expectation that the US ambassador routinely seeks s with members of your Parliament. An ambassador to a de- c country must actively seek to establish an effective working relationship with the national legislature or he or she fails to serve their country effectively."

Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi and her foreign minister have taken the only stand they could in defending Narayanan. In standing up for Narayanan, Mrs Gandhi is backing a man who has served with distinction. Outwardly, Narayanan is gentle, quiet, shy and thoroughly homespun. He likes to describe himself as not "dramatically, but quietly unorthodox." His distaste for bureaucracy and monotony manifested itself in 1954 when, after only a handful of years in the foreign service, he told Prime Minister Nehru that he wanted out.

Statesmanship: He came to Washington after having served as vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University when Indo-American relations were at their lowest. Kampuchea, Afghanistan, the Tarapur imbroglio, World Bank borrowings, arms sales to Pakistan seemed intractable problems between the two countries. That these issues are less rancorous now is partly a tribute to his statesmanship.



B.K. Nehru (left) and L.K. Jha

Narayanan may not have the flamboyance of a B.K. Nehru or the wherewithal of political infighting associated with L.K. Jha. He despairs of politics and political confrontation yet he is a shrewd negotiator, a sophist, an effective verbal tactician with a sense of humour—all these have won him widespread admiration.

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His constant theme has been that America's misunderstanding of India's independent behaviour is detrimental to America's own global interests and that disagreements need not be an impediment to good relations. He is India's most peripatetic ambassador—lecturing at colleges, addressing foreign policy associations, talking to navy officers' wives, church groups, college students, high school students—and the invitations keep pouring in. "He has done a superb job in trying to reach out and touch the American people," a senior US diplomat said. Narayanan's style stems from his belief that American democracy lies in the unfettered pluralism of its people, in the thousands of countervailing centres of power and authority.

High Regard: He knows also, that a member of Congress will rarely act on an issue unless motivated by letters and calls from constituents. It is to them that Narayanan has addressed himself.

And Narayanan is widely credited with successfully persuading Congressman Steve Solarz, chairman of the Asia Sub-committee, to lead the fight against the delivery of F-16s to Pakistan—a battle the Reagan Administration came dangerously close to losing. And his (Solarz's) respect for Narayanans was probably best demonstrated when he invited the Narayanan for Thanksgiving dinner.

That he is held in high regard is in little doubt. Narayanan is the only ambassador who was able to get all the new members of the Congress to his house for dinner. And he regales such audiences with sentences like: "India is like a dome of many-coloured glass, iridiscent and fragile in appearence, but elastic and unbreakable in substance." And: "I am tempted to describe the Indo-US relationship as half full of cold, half full of fire, in the words that the Spanish poet Lorca applied to a woman in one of his lyrics. The task of diplomacy, or rather statesmanship, is to mix the hot and cold."

PUNJAB

The English Craze

THE DEMANDS of Akali extremists in Punjab are in a sense, being rivalled by those who have benefited from the state's affluence. Fuelled by the green revolution and money from Punjabis abroad, Punjab now boasts of an estimated 5,000 teaching shops, pandering to the 'English medium' aspirations of Punjab's rising middle classes. Kabir, Nanak, Dashmesh, Rama Krishna and Dayanand have followed Christ, Mary, Joseph and even Jones on hoardings which tempt "discerning parents to send their children for the most modern, western style education for the total development of their personality". There are even schools announcing air-conditioned buildings to produce "an integrated, harmonious child personality".

The race to outclass each other is endless and the expansion has been rapid. With rudimentary facilities and premises ranging from a ramshackle room to a 1,000 sq yd plot, schools have sprung up all over the state. Most numerous in the Doaba belt of Jullundur, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur, their popularity in areas as diverse as Phagwara, Nawanshehar, Batala, Bhatinda, Patiala, Amritsar and Chandigarh is evident. Chandigarh has the dubious distinction of at least a dozen 'public schools' in every sector, which gross Rs 10 lakh each annually. Said Gurdev Singh of Phagwara, which boasts 20 such schools: "We began a small school six years back with 50 students and now the total enrolment is 500."

Rarely has the promise been borne out by their performance. Said a bitter Nirmal Singh of Kharar: "Ignorant parents wanting to give the best education pay through their nose and seldom get anything but misfit children." His wife Jaswant added: "After primary school, we have to send these children, whose only learning is a good uniform, to government middle or high schools." In fact, in most cases, as a teacher in Khanna admitted, these children only learn "to warble a few not-so-English songs in their Punjabi accent".

Thriving Racket: Almost all retired principals of public schools and enterprising teachers have entered the lucrative business which thrives on unemployed graduates who are paid far less than their colleagues in government schools. One of the poorer schools in Kharar has three-room premises rented for Rs 175, a 100 students who pay between Rs 12 and Rs 18, five matriculate teachers who earn between Rs 80 and Rs 150, and a headmistress who earns Rs 200. "We are here not for any love either for teaching or for children. Unemployment has forced us," says an unabashed Madan Mohan, a graduate teaching in a Ludhiana 'convent' for Rs 250 a month.

In the thrust towards literacy, affluence, both here and abroad, has been a powerful incubator. Argued Dr M.S. Randhawa, former vice-chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University: "The need for quality education has never been so strong. A Punjabi is now an international personality spread all over the world and his new urge is to modernize. English, he finds, is a vehicle that will take him to the latest technology. Therefore, these so-called English medium schools."

Funds from abroad have come in a flood. Said Darshan Singh of Nawanshehar: "It is the dollars and pounds which our brothers and sisters send home that have enabled us to get a good education." Almost every family in this town has somebo UK, US, Canada or West Asia. Local b have at least Rs 20 crore as deposits by Punjabis working abroad. Currently quantum of annual payments to the from abroad is Rs 300 crore, of which alone accounts for Rs 60 crore. Muc this is being invested in either real es liquor or education. In a typical exan the sons of Bahadur Singh of Bhaga, have themselves suffered the lack of mo education, are funding the education of children from Southall.

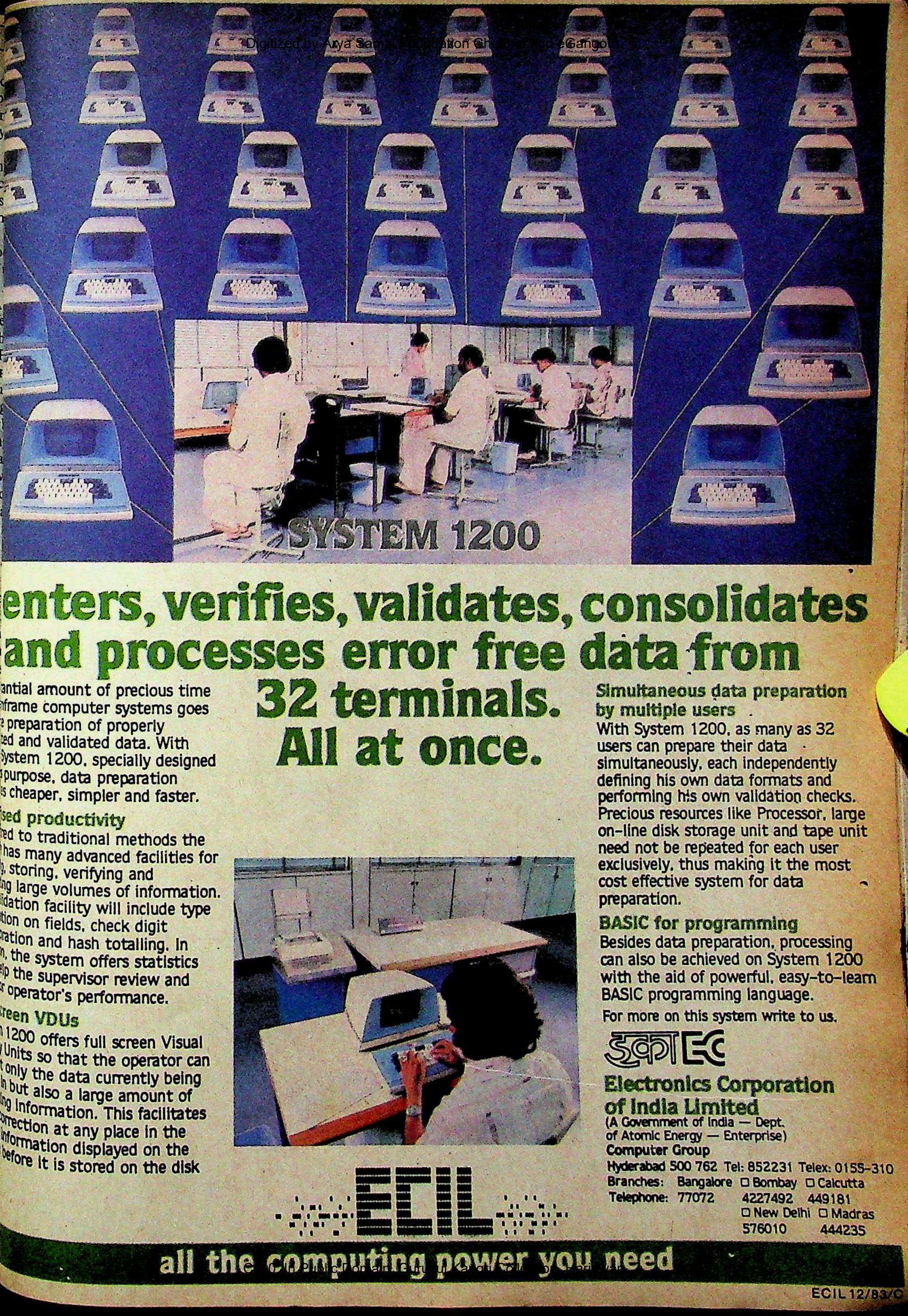
A new 'public school' in Kharar: thriving business

Official Indifference: Meanwhile, state Government has remained indiffe to the ill-effects of these schools which neither recognised nor affiliated. F by Punjab School Education Board (Chairman Bharpur Singh for the statu regularisation of a thriving racket have unheard. Though Chief Minister Dar Singh has laconically remarked that "I a that most of these schools are only chea shops but they speak volumes about people need", the state's education p has continued to be sadly at vari with these needs. Said Education Min Harcharan Singh Ajnala: "Those who afford to spend more money are welc to go their way."

Currently, Punjab continues to sp Rs 176 crore in maintaining 23 government and recognised Pun and Hindi medium schools. Edi tion at the primary level is compul and Bharpur Singh estimates number of students at around 33 la But even though there is one school in a radius of every 2.6 km all the 12,000-odd villages have mary schools, the 'convent' boon managing to sustain itself.

PSEB sources allege the existe of a powerful lobby of succes public schools in league with p ticians which has scuttled all mo to stem the stream of half-ba students. They point to the case of Adarsh schools which were plan by Prakash Singh Badal under a vious government in 1978 with li ries, hostels and playgrounds modern, scientific education. In suance of an initial plan to constr one such school in each of the blocks, eight buildings were comp ed at a cost of Rs 1.75 crore. N these well-equipped schools lie awaiting the implementation of th closure which was announced by D bara Singh in 1980. Clearly, large nu bers of students who trudge to sch with heavy satchels on their bac seek the muses of learning in vain.

—GOBIND THUKR



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AN INTEGRATED DRIVE

THE DATA Products division of DCM is going international. The company has opened an office in Singapore for software as well as hardware sales, and is setting up a joint venture there for the manufacture of computer peripherals, in partnership with International Engineering and Textile Services Pvt Ltd, Singapore. DCM has also opened an office in Fort Worth, Texas, as another base for its software export operations, with a programme to develop software systems for Tandy Corporation. A few Indian engineers are already posted in Texas, and more are due to go soon. DCM has also signed up with Control Data Corporation for the manufacture of hard disc drives, with an investment of between Rs 1.5 crore and Rs 2 crore. The Data Products division had a turnover last year of over Rs 12 crore, and is expected to witness a quantum jump soon because of new systems being offered, some of them in partnership with Control Data.

CARROTS FOR INDUSTRY

ACKAGE of handsome incentives is likely to be announced hortly by the Government for companies that decide to set up units in non-industry districts. These will probably relaxations in the application of the Monopolies and ive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act and the Foreign Exchange ions Act (FERA), as well as a series of financial incentives g lower rates of interest on loans, a higher debt-equity ratio cial subsidies for the development of the required infra-e. The Government expects that these will neutralise the ntages involved in setting up a new unit in an undeveloped

O'S WOES

FETY match giant Wimco Ltd is in for troubled times. oduction of matches has dropped since 1978, when a new ise structure was introduced favouring small-scale manufac-Profits too have dropped by 40 per cent since 1978 to Rs 1.3 nd the company has announced production cuts ranging per cent to 50 per cent at its various plants. The worst is the one at Madras, where output has been cut by half, and per cent of the workmen laid off. There is speculation now ng the Madras plant down altogether, though no final seems to have been taken.

WHEELER TRUMP CARD

TER announcing that a committee would go into the question of regulating the large deposits collected from prospective customers by two-wheeler manufacturers, the ment seems to have decided to soft-pedal the issue. The ed committee is yet to be formally constituted, and enquiries government officials produce non-committal replies. hile, close to Rs 300 crore have been collected by two scooter ies: Bajaj Auto and Lohia Machines. Bajaj has Rs 130 crore earlier bookings for its scooters, plus Rs 30 crore on its M-50 ycle (down from the initial Rs 57 crore because of cancel-. A further Rs 35 crore was collected recently through fresh bookings by Bajaj and its associated company, Maharashtra s. Lohia Machines, meanwhile, has collected Rs 95 crore. A al of this money has found its way into the inter-corporate market, while still more has reportedly been used to finance the recent stock market speculation. Meanwhile, Maruti is expected to collect between Rs 60 crore and Rs 250 crore by e bookings for its new vehicles—both cars and vans—close June.

DOWN IN THE DUMPS

THE STOCK market seems to have lost its confidence in the short-term future. *The Economic Times* share index fell steadily through most of March, registering a drop of 3.3 per cent during the month, to 233.6 from the February-end level of 241. The drop would have been even more precipitous if it were not for the unusual rise in DCM and Escorts prices in Delhi—where, as a consequence, the local index rose during the month by over 11 per cent to 463.4. The general downswing seems to have been caused by the uninspiring Central budget and the uncertain future faced by many industries, whether it is tobacco, sugar, paper, aluminium, or chemicals—all of which have lost heavily on the stock market. Yet another reason is the normal downswing in share prices towards the end of the financial year, when investors have to face up to their wealth tax liabilities and tend to push the prices down.

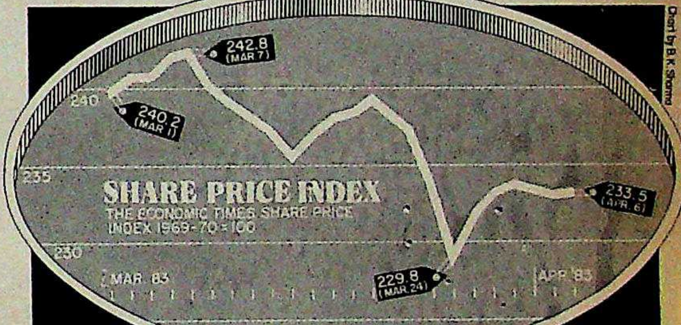


Chart by B.K. Sharma

SLIPPED DISCS

THE FLUTTER caused by reports of a number of groups bidding for the Gramophone Company of India (GCI) has died down, with the GCI denying that its parent company abroad, Thorn EMI, is going to sell its 40 per cent holding. But even if the Mahindras or Singhanias fail to bag the company, GCI's problems are far from over. The company has been forced over the last year to introduce a voluntary retirement scheme for its employees (reducing the work-force by 25 per cent), to sell its sophisticated recording studio in Bombay, and to close one of its recording factories, apart from pulling out altogether from consumer electronics products like record-players. The company effected a change at the top in February, with managing director Anil Sud making way for Mahindra Dave, but is still struggling to come to terms with a music market now dominated by pirated cassettes.

The Wages Of Disparity

COULD it be true that fitters, mechanics and drivers earn far more than engineers and accountants in some companies in India? It is true, cross my heart.

I have been looking through the annual reports of two companies picked up at random, Indian Explosives Limited (IEL), a company of the ICI group of Calcutta, and Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) of Bombay. Indian Explosives derives most of its income and profits not from explosives but from fertilisers and has plants in Gomia (Bihar) and Kanpur. Mahindra & Mahindra makes jeeps and tractors, apart from other products, and has plants in Bombay and Nasik. Both are large companies, flag-bearers of their respective groups, each with a turnover exceeding Rs 200 crore. IEL is No. 17 in private sector company ranking (by assets) and M&M is No. 26.

Indian Explosives has on its pay-roll 26 drivers, 41 loaders, 114 fitters, 34 riggers and 255 clerks (known as assistants) who last year earned more than Rs 3,000 a month. There are also other artisans like masons, welders and mechanics who also drew similar wages and perks. In M&M there were 20 drivers, 149 machine operators, 66 clerks and typists and a host of other similar categories totalling around 600 who also earned similar salaries. This number does not include managers and other officers.

Deserved Wages: What is wrong with a fitter or a driver or porter—which is what a loader is—making over Rs 100 a day, you might ask. Nothing wrong, really. If a company thinks that its driver or mechanic is worth that much it is fully entitled to pay him that amount. The wage element is the value-added portion in manufacturing and if a company pays a porter or fitter Rs 3,000 a month or more, it no doubt believes that that much value is added by that particular category of worker, and there is no reason why he should not receive or we should grudge him that amount. The question is how an Indian company can afford to pay it.

Now, look at the other side of the picture. Last August, the Centre fixed minimum wages in agriculture for unskilled workers—what are known as farm labourers—at between Rs 6.75 and Rs 10 a day, depending upon states. But in many cases this is not what they got. In Andhra Pradesh, the minimum wage—which is often not all that different from the maximum—tends to be nearer Rs 4 a day while in Bihar it is 5 kg of paddy (or other kinds of grain) and one light meal. In Gujarat and Punjab, the wages are a little higher, around Rs 10 a day with meals. But the average seems to be nearer Rs 8 a day without meals, and possibly as low as Rs 3 a day for a child, also without meals.

Once again, you might say, wages are what the traffic can bear and if Rs 8 a day is what a farmer can pay, that is what he will pay and no more. And if it is not wrong to pay Rs 3,000 a month to a porter—who is also an unskilled man—working in a factory, it is also not wrong, speaking strictly in economic terms, to pay Rs 8 a day to a farm labourer, an equally unskilled man.

Interacting Areas: Well, there would be nothing wrong if the two worked in watertight compartments of their own, and if the porter in M&M had nothing to do with, say, a farm labourer in Nasik where M&M has its plant, or a boatman on the Ganga in Kanpur where IEL produces its fertiliser. Unfortunately or fortunately, their worlds are not watertight, for nothing in this world is watertight. The porter in M&M helps produce tractors which are used by farmers who employ farm labour which, in turn, produces foodgrains or bananas or grapes which are consumed by M&M porters. Similarly, IEL fertiliser is also used by farmers and spread in the field by farm labourers.

These are direct links and may be exceptional but industrial and farm economies interact with each other at a number of points and the fact that an unskilled factory worker makes 10 or 15 times as much as his counterpart on the farm must naturally hav impact on the overall economy. An things stand, the impact of such a wide parity in purchasing power cannot bu disruptive in the long run.

The two systems—a highly orga factory sector and a more or less disor sed farms sector—work side by side but cannot work in isolation. The orga sector makes use of modern techno capital and management skills to m facture products that have to be ultim absorbed by the entire economy. Its pro tivity is high mainly because of the relat high technology and skills that it uses. farm sector, on the other hand, uses tec logy that is ancient, has virtually no acce organised capital but does great deal of labour, with result that its productivit low. In one system, high ductivity leads to high wage another, low productivity sults in low subsistence wa But the two exist side by and have to move in tanc When they don't, somethi bound to give way, and something is the economy it Lots of other things give also—social cohesion, poli stability and so on—but first thing to give way is economy.

Slowing Growth: If look at the economy in the round, or w the economists call the macro level, you notice that both the farm and industrial tors have been slowing down for the last or five years. Farm production has reac something of a plateau and foodgr output has averaged around 130 mill tonnes for the past five years or so. Indust production has not yet reached a dead s but as S.M. Ghosh, secretary of indust development in the Industry Ministry an perceptive observer of the industrial sce remarked at the annual session of the As ciation of Indian Engineering Industry (held in New Delhi last week, we are against a wall. The feeling that "we are against a wall" is confined neither to Gh nor to India. It is a world-wide feeling.

The reasons why the farm and indust sectors are not growing are different. Fo production is not increasing because of c straints on the supply side. Industry is not panding because of constraints on demand side. Industry in India is virtua

Industrial and farm economies interact with each other at a number of points and the fact that an unskilled factory worker makes 10 or 15 times as much as his counterpart on the farm must naturally have its impact on the overall economy...the impact of such a wide disparity in purchasing power cannot but be disruptive in the long run.

cient—it has access to technology, nd a vast fund of managerial and l skills—and there is no earthly hy it should not grow twice as rapid- in fact doing. But it is not expanding demand for its products is not ex- The demand for most industrial at least consumer goods, arises in that sector itself, and very little tside, as agriculture simply does not p the kind of surpluses required to the output of other sectors.

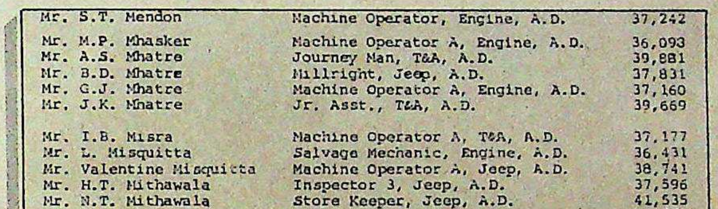
s a vicious circle, with the result that has to fall back upon its resources to t it produces. When this is not possi- is, when its own incomes do not rise ough despite high wages, industry subsidies and credits which is an- ay of pushing up de- rough transfer of reso- p against a wall of stag- r falling demand, indu- India is asking precisely e Third World is asking luent countries—more more cash, more aid.

VE a theory which is a l of Peter's Principle ed upside down: work- omes in an industry rise the incomes of its custo- n the US, a mechanic or orking in, say, General can afford to buy a car h he has worked. A ste- n a five-star hotel who ly makes about $30 to day can stay once in a five-star hotels without f a pinch. Customers for al products are found here—in factories, ban- s—and at all levels, and happen only when the y has expanded both ly and horizontally.

Japan, for instance, the income of an farm family is higher than that of an industry-based working family. In and elsewhere, it is slightly lower, but ch. It is only in India and similar de- g countries that income disparities arge and inhibiting. A farm labourer income of Rs 10 a day can buy no han 4 kg of wheat with it and is left tually nothing for anything else. He a stranger to the modern industrial of polyester fibre and TV sets.

psided Structure: This paradox of de- ent is seen in the way our economy wn. The contribution of agriculture nal income has dropped from 60 per 1950 to around 40 per cent in 1980, by ns a major structural transformation. But this has not had much of an effect on the employment pattern. Roughly 70 per cent of the working force is employed in agriculture, the same as it used to be 30 years ago.

To the extent that income from agriculture has gone up, the situation has improved but only marginally. If the proportion of working force employed in agriculture had also come down by the same margin from, say, 70 per cent to 50 per cent, or, better still, 45 per cent, the horizontal spread would have been much wider and the industrial economy would have received a boost. M&M and IEL would have of course paid Rs 3,000 and more to their drivers and fitters, but the men who labour in the fields would have also made something like Rs 1,000 a month, instead of Rs 200 or Rs 300 now.



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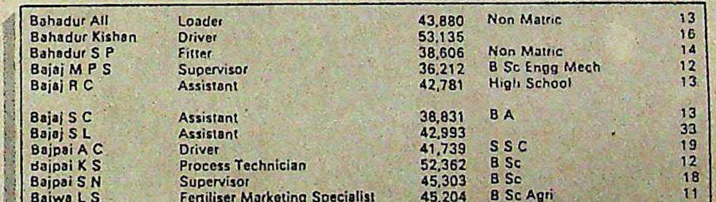
Mr. M.P. Mhasker	Machine Operator A, Engine, A.D.	36,093
Mr. A.S. Mhatre	Journey Man, T&A, A.D.	39,881
Mr. B.D. Mhatre	Millright, Jeep, A.D.	37,831
Mr. G.J. Mhatre	Machine Operator A, Engine, A.D.	37,160
Mr. J.K. Mhatre	Jr. Asst., T&A, A.D.	39,669
Mr. I.B. Misra	Machine Operator A, T&A, A.D.	37,177
Mr. L. Misquitta	Salvage Mechanic, Engine, A.D.	36,431
Mr. Valentine Misquitta	Machine Operator A, Jeep, A.D.	38,741
Mr. H.T. Mithawala	Inspector 3, Jeep, A.D.	37,596
Mr. N.T. Mithawala	Store Keeper, Jeep, A.D.	41,535
*Mr. Dil Mohd.	Trimmer A, Jeep, A.D.	36,233
Mr. S.A. Mohite	Machine Operator A, Engine, A.D.	36,138
Mr. V.P. Money	Machine Operator A, T&A, A.D.	36,412
Mr. D.S. More	Driver, Jeep, A.D.	44,784
Mr. A.M. Mugdam	Driver, Jeep, A.D.	49,899
Mr. A. Mukundan	Driver, Jeep, A.D.	42,065
Mr. R.V. Murkunde	Sr. Asst., Jeep, A.D.	39,792

Extracts from the annual reports of Mahindra & Mahindra (above) and Indian Explosives, showing the earnings of some of their staff



Bahadur All	Loader	43,880	Non Matric	13
Bahadur Kishan	Driver	53,135		16
Bahadur S P	Fitter	38,606	Non Matric	14
Bajaj M P S	Supervisor	36,212	B Sc Engg Mech	12
Bajaj R C	Assistant	42,781	High School	13
Bajaj S C	Assistant	38,831	B A	13
Bajaj S L	Assistant	42,993		33
Bajpai A C	Driver	41,739	S S C	19
Bajpai K S	Process Technician	52,362	B Sc	12
Bajpai S N	Supervisor	45,303	B Sc	18
Bajwa L S	Fertiliser Marketing Specialist	45,204	B Sc Agri	11
Bakshi N K P]	Supervisor	42,889	B A	27
Bal N K	Assistant	55,116	Matric	31
Balakrishnan V	Supervisor	36,206	B Sc	20
Bali S K	Fitter	52,244	Non Matric	22
Bamal O P	Supervisor	63,096	High School	23

Private industry has been able to maintain its high-wage islands by employing as few people as possible. Over the last 10 years, additional employment created in the private sector manufacturing industry was 5 lakh, or about 50,000 a year, or just under 150 a day. Yet during this period, the assets of these companies have doubled to around Rs 15,000 crore. In some companies the number of employees has actually declined, though their sales and profits have trebled. Even in the massive public sector which is supposed to be guided by social objectives, employment in manufacturing units has gone up by only about 60,000 a year, or less than 200 a day. And to think that during this single decade, the working force has increased by 50 million.

Creating Demand: The high-wage islands have led to a high-priced industrial economy that cannot be sustained without hidden subsidies, hand-outs and inflation. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has been criticising Central budgets for their deficits—not that they are high, but that they are not high enough. A slight credit squeeze about this time last year brought the tractor industry virtually to a halt and the truck-making industry to the brink.

There are also other ways of creating demand. The pharmaceutical industry would be hard put to maintain itself without the generous schemes of reimbursement of medical expenses that cover nearly all employees in the organised sector. The tourism industry would come close to collapse without the leave travel facilities that are also available to most such employees. These are ways by which industries—including the Government which is also a kind of industry—help one another to keep up demand. And when everything fails, businessmen ask government to increase spending somehow, even if this has to be done by printing money. A little inflation, they say, is good for the economy, like a little of you know what.

Economic Logic: At the AIEI session, Ghosh was asked why the Government insisted on companies going into backward areas at such a high cost when there are no facilities worth the name—no roads, no schools, no housing—and why the Government could not first develop the infrastructure and let the industries in. Ghosh is a mild-mannered man but he blew his top. He said that the sheer force of economic logic—not social or political logic, mind you, but purely economic —would one day force companies to go into virgin areas in search of additional demand for their products. For, if they didn't, and stuck to their narrow vertical pyramid, they would soon come up against a wall. "The United States of America," he said, "would not be united states if industry were concentrated in New York and Chicago and Pittsburg. And India will not remain India if industry—and affluence—is concentrated in Bombay and Calcutta and a few other places."

It is not often that I see eye to eye with government spokesmen but in this case Ghosh is trying to say something we should listen to.

FICCI

Federation Fracas

VANASPATI traders have overrun the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). And they have company—from exercise book manufacturers, jaggery merchants, petroleum traders, surgical cotton manufacturers and workshop and garage owners. What are these petty businessmen doing in the country's apex body of business people, the mouthpiece of big business? In a word: voting.

Premier industrialists, busy feuding among themselves, have resorted to traditional Congress-style politics in an effort to wrest control of an organisation that gives them both prestige and influence. And the chosen weapon is membership drives aimed at creating vote banks that strengthen their bargaining position within the organisation.

The Modis started the game two years ago, with a host of previously unknown associations from western Uttar Pradesh—the Modis' home ground—being enrolled as members. This year, others have begun to play ball. Ashok Jain, the new FICCI president, is believed to be behind the sudden influx of new members from Bihar, while the Poddars are said to have engineered the membership of 'Vanaspati Associations' from Alwar, Bandikui, Beawar, Chouri, Deeg, Dholpur, Kishangarh, Kota, Mahuwa, Nagaur, Pali, Sanganer, Sawai Madhopur and other small towns in Rajasthan.

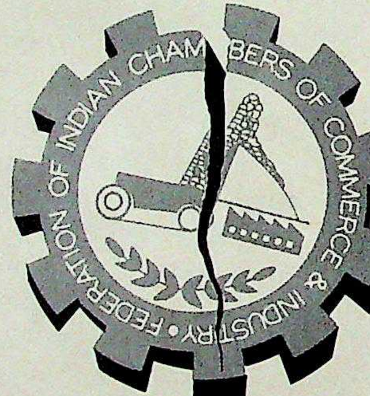
Membership: The results have been startling. Two years ago, FICCI had fewer than 600 voting members. Last year, the number rose to 850 and this year to 1,450—a 150 per cent increase in two years. In just one meeting of the FICCI committee last November, no fewer than 270 members and associate members were admitted.

On voting day this year, Sunday, April 3—voting being for election to the all-powerful FICCI committee—no fewer than 300 newly-admitted members had queued up outside the FICCI building on New Delhi's Tansen Marg. What made this odd was that the queue had formed at six in the morning, three hours before voting was due to start. The members had all been brought in busloads from outlying towns.

The more sober stalwarts of FICCI view these developments with undisguised concern. Charat Ram, FICCI president 10 years ago, dismisses the new entrants as "bogus members" while Bharat Ram, also a former FICCI president, worries about the fact that no one is looking into the antecedents of the new members.

FICCI's affairs are run by a combination of constitutional diktat and informal understandings. Members comprise associations of trade and industry, while individual companies can enrol as associate members. The key policy-making body is the FICCI committee, which among other things elects a vice-president every year. This is done unanimously as a matter of tradition, with the different geographical regions getting their turn in a fixed rotation cycle. And the vice-president one year automatically becomes the president the following year. Contests focus, therefore, on elections to the committee and the selection of the vice-president.

K.N. Modi (left) and K.K. Birla: ganging up


FEDERATION OF INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

(From left) Jain, Singhania and Gandhi: jockeying for power

Changed Picture: For many years, large houses called the shots within parameters, and no one questioned thei thority. Not any more. Newly risen in trial families are questioning the authori the more established business czars: Modis are asserting themselves in the n and the Birlas' authority is being tested i east. Among the regions themselves, rapidly industrialising north has stak claim to—and wrested—a greater sa FICCI affairs. This year, for instance, the tion cycle for the vice-president (and the re for the president as well) was change the old cycle of six years, the west and got two turns each, and the weaker south north one turn each. From now on, the will be four years, with each region gettin equal turn.

Much of the politicking would ap quite pointless, since control of FICCI br no financial gain or obvious power. M FICCI presidents have in fact complained their businesses suffered because of diver of their attention to running FICCI. Bu gains of such control, though intangible not to be lightly dismissed. As the outg FICCI president, G.K. Devarajulu, says: a representative of FICCI, you can freque meet and get to know ministers secretaries to the Government." Adde this is the ego boost involved in heading controlling, the country's most influe industrial lobby. As Bharat Ram rhetorically, "Why are ordinary elections fought so fiercely? And su control of FICCI is far more important controlling a club."

The new era in FICCI politics bega 1981, when several candid who had been backed by Birlas and Modis suffered u pected defeats at the hands candidates backed by memb from the western region. D ding to marshal forces to prev such a recurrence, the Modis enrolled large numbers of members from western U Pradesh.

When the time for the 1 elections came around, the Bi and Modis were well prepared with t vote banks, and insisted that the ho Bombay group should withdraw its candi tes from the western region, and make for others backed by the Modis and Bir Among those who were forced to withdr was Mrs Sharayu Daphtary, a former pr dent of the venerable Indian Mercha Chamber and the only woman candidat the race.

But the resultant heartburn amo western members paled in comparison w the emotions stirred up by another ba

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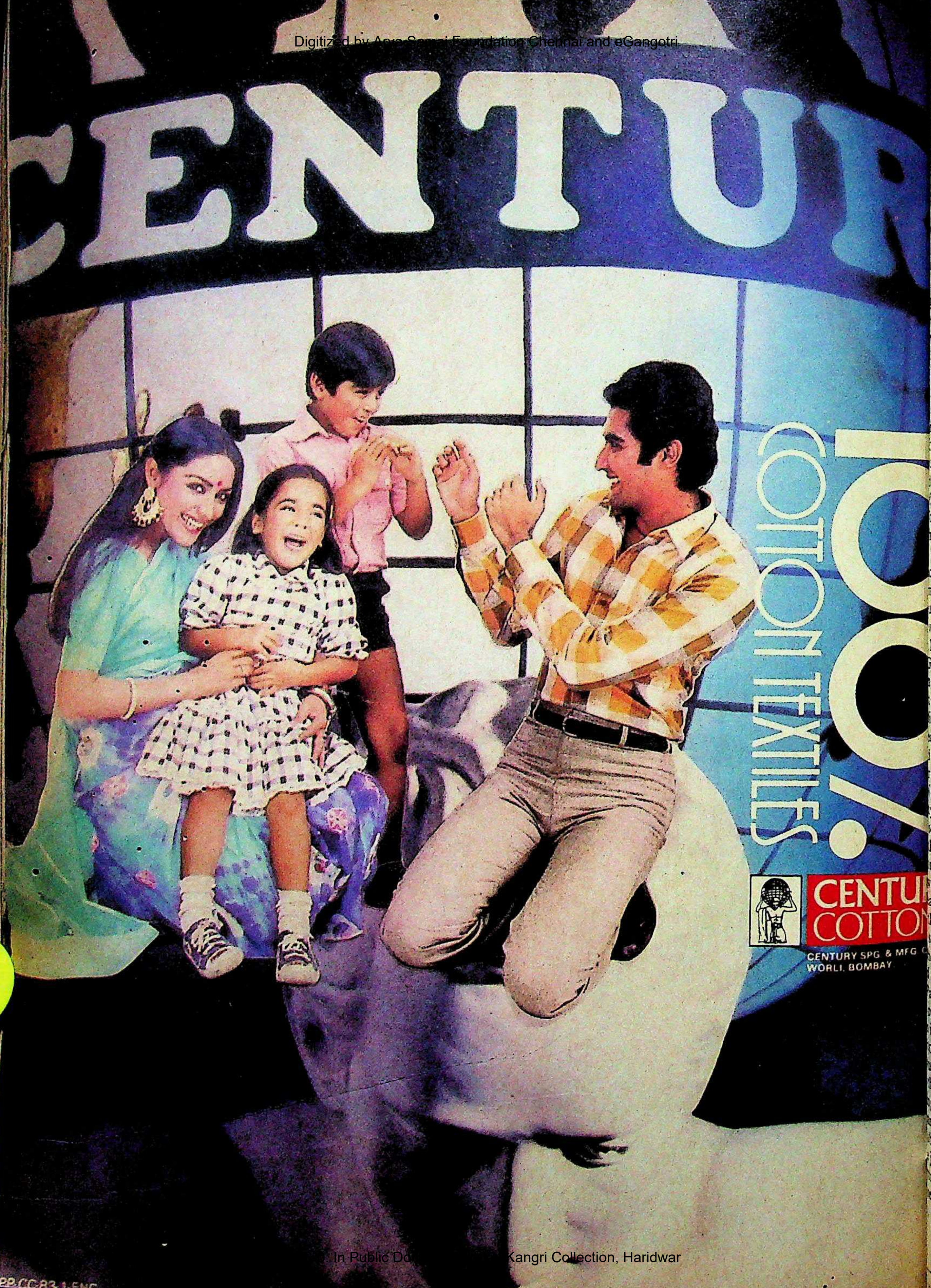
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ought within the eastern region. urn it was last year to provide the vi- dent. K.K. Birla backed R.P. of the Duncan group, but Ashok the Sahu-Jain group) claimed senio- had the support of a former presi- ari Shanker Singhania. The final mise saw Jain romping home over opposition. The broad alignments s formed: Jain and Singhania, see- break free from the Birla umbrella, common ally in the Bombay group P.V. Gandhi, while the Birlas and ot together to form a powerful east- halanx.

n Tussle: This year, both factions for battle well in advance. The enrolled even more new members. a leaf from their book, rival factions same. The result was the doubling of ship almost overnight. Many old- CI members have little doubt that the ants are dummy organisations paid supported by the principals in the or control of FICCI. Unwilling to r the record, they confess to worry at such developments portend.

the ballot battle, the vote gatherers victors. The Birla-Modi team was ong other things, to inflict yet ano- miliating defeat on the Bombay whose leader P.V. Gandhi had put up Madhav Gandhi as one of the candi- andhi lost, while a series of Birla-bac- didates won. Jain, with the assured of large numbers of new members har, was able to get his son Samir ted, while Hari Shanker Singhania that Govind Hari Singhania was winner. Commented one FICCI mem- ot only have we resorted to the Con- yle of cornering dummy votes, we o started practising dynastic success- he FICCI committee."

r the election of a vice-president, the as even more intense. With the new ar rotation cycle having been agreed he point of dispute was surprisingly hould the new rotation cycle start e west or the north? The former Ramkrishna Bajaj, and the latter atodia. The issue was deadlocked for n end and was finally settled by arbi- in favour of Bajaj, only hours before CI annual session finally ended.

going president Devarajulu was re- at matters passed off smoothly, even that "there has been no politics in ". But few others are under any illu- out the situation. Battle, they know, oined yet again at the next available nity. And unless the senior members some restraint, as Bharat Ram "it might ruin the institution."

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

TAXATION

Uncharitable Move

INDUSTRIAL corporations which were expecting a pat on the back from the Government for their recent ventures into rural uplift were rudely shocked to discover that the Government's new finance bill pulls the rug right from under their feet. The amendments to Sections 35 CC and 35 CCA of the Income Tax Act withdraw tax concessions to the corporate sector for rural development schemes, whether undertaken by the corporation directly or by specified voluntary associations.

The Finance Ministry's rationale in stopping tax relief for rural development is that it wants to prevent "the possibility of misuse". The finance minister, however, continues to assure the business world that the Government is not interested in depriving genuine rural development programmes of corporate support; only now, a fund called the Prime Minister's Fund for Rural Development would be set up instead, contributions to which would be exempt from tax.

Industrial houses in general are sceptical of the Government's claim that the concessions are being withdrawn because of the possibility of misuse.

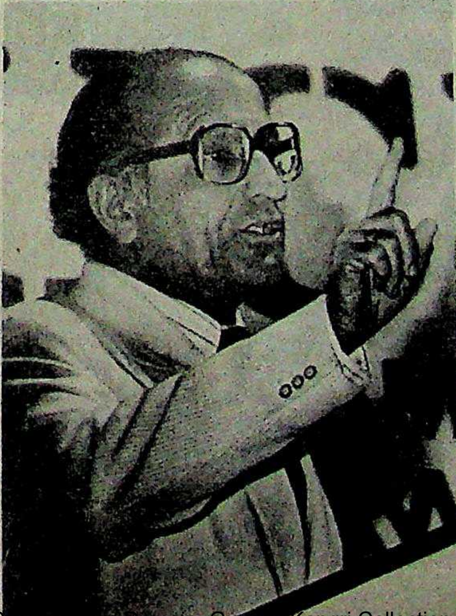
The industry has reacted with hostility to the suggestion that corporate charity to the rural sector should find its way into just one pocket. Legal luminary N.A. Palkhivala in his budget speech in Bombay charged that the amendment of Sections 35 CC and 35 CCA amounts to unabashed politicisation of an essential national service. He called it, "a backdoor method of legalising political donations with full tax relief at the expense of the nation, while Section 293A of the Companies Act continues, in theory, to prevent political donations". Palkhivala has hinted that he would take the matter to court. In a final dig at the Government, he said: "It is not the present law which lends itself to the possibility of misuse, but it is the proposed amendment which will lend itself to the probability of misuse."

Disgruntled Industry: The industrial houses in general are sceptical of the Government's claim that the concessions are being withdrawn because of the possibility of misuse. D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) notes that there is such intense, and often time-consuming, scrutiny of the proposed rural projects by the prescribed authority that there is little scope for misutilisation. The finance minister in his reply to the budget debate, however, stated in Parliament that out of the Rs 200 crore approved for corporate rural development in Maharashtra, only Rs 6.975 crore has actually been utilised. Business houses, however, feel that the minister must have been wrongly briefed; they point out that the total amount sanctioned so far under the scheme, throughout the country, does not add up to more than Rs 150 crore. If the funds are not utilised, say the businessman, then in any case the tax exemption cannot be claimed.

The 1976 tax incentive scheme was not meant merely to pump funds into the countryside; rather it was meant to effectively utilise corporate management skills in village uplift. While government agencies aim at either physical or fiscal targets, the hope here was that the corporate sector would concentrate on mobilisation of human resources. Industry was given an opportunity to carry out its social responsibilities directly and witness the fruits of its endeavour. A. Sarkar, secretary of the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) rural development committee, notes that industries have a far better record than government agencies for follow-up action on their projects.

Around 300 companies have availed of

Palkhivala: sharply critical



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development tax concessions so far. business houses such as the Tatas, d Mafatlals have a long history of opy in the rural areas adjoining ories, but the momentum for corterest in rural development really a big way only after 1976. Among panies which have begun to show e results under the scheme are Anil Industries which adopted Nimeda Jaipur, Coromandel Fertilisers, dustries, Usha Martin, Indian es and Hindustan Lever. Joseph in charge of FICCI's rural develop-b-committee, feels that with the ent in the tax law many of the es will discontinue their rural social er their pending schemes end.

pened Enthusiasm: Sarkar points already 10 rural projects in n, which were waiting for clearance escribed authorities even before the ill was passed, are now unlikely to up. A.C. Sen, vice-president of the ion of Voluntary Agencies for Rural ment, feels that the tax amendents g to "sound the death-knell to y action in the country". He points many industrial houses had built up it infrastructure for rural development employing social workers and experts.

The industry, in general, feels that the Government before pointing an accusing finger at corporate performance in this sector should take a closer look back home. Sen in a letter to Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, has suggested that before setting up the Prime Minister's Rural Development Fund, lessons be learnt from the history of other centralised funds in the past. Says Sen: "The prime minister's relief fund has, over time, become a channel for various state governments to receive funds in preference to social welfare agencies for whom primarily the fund was created by the late Jawaharlal Nehru. Another example is that of People's Action for Development of India (PADI) created by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and of which the minister of agriculture is the president. Ever since the present agriculture minister has assumed presidentship of PADI he has brought its activity to a halt; huge funds donated by several international organisations which it has accepted are lying in fixed deposits for the last three years. Commitments made to assist approved projects are not being fulfilled and applicant voluntary organisations are informally being advised to bring letters of recommendation from Congress(I) MP's hailing from their constituencies."

S.R. Hiremath, president of the Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development in Karnataka, makes a similar accusation: "This is a calculated move to centralise funds with the prime minister in order to transfer funds to those aligned with the ruling party." Citing the example of PADI, Hiremath notes that DANIDA, the Danish development agency, has, for instance, been writing repeatedly to PADI enquiring about money that it had sent for non-governmental organisations. He points out that although the term of the members of PADI expired long ago, they still continue to remain in office. Hiremath fears that the industrialists will use the prime minister's new fund as a weapon to curry favour, and donations would be rewarded by licences or permits.

The rate of utilisation of financial allocations by the states under the Integrated Rural Development Programme during the Sixth Five Year Plan period is in itself revealing. Out of Rs 1,753.85 crore allocated in the sixth plan, so far only Rs 608.92 crore has been utilised, more than half-way through the plan period.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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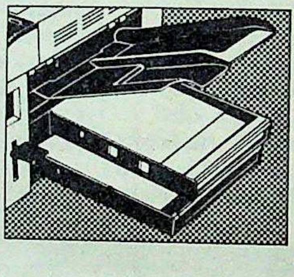

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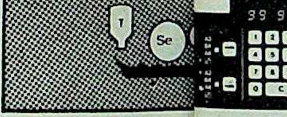

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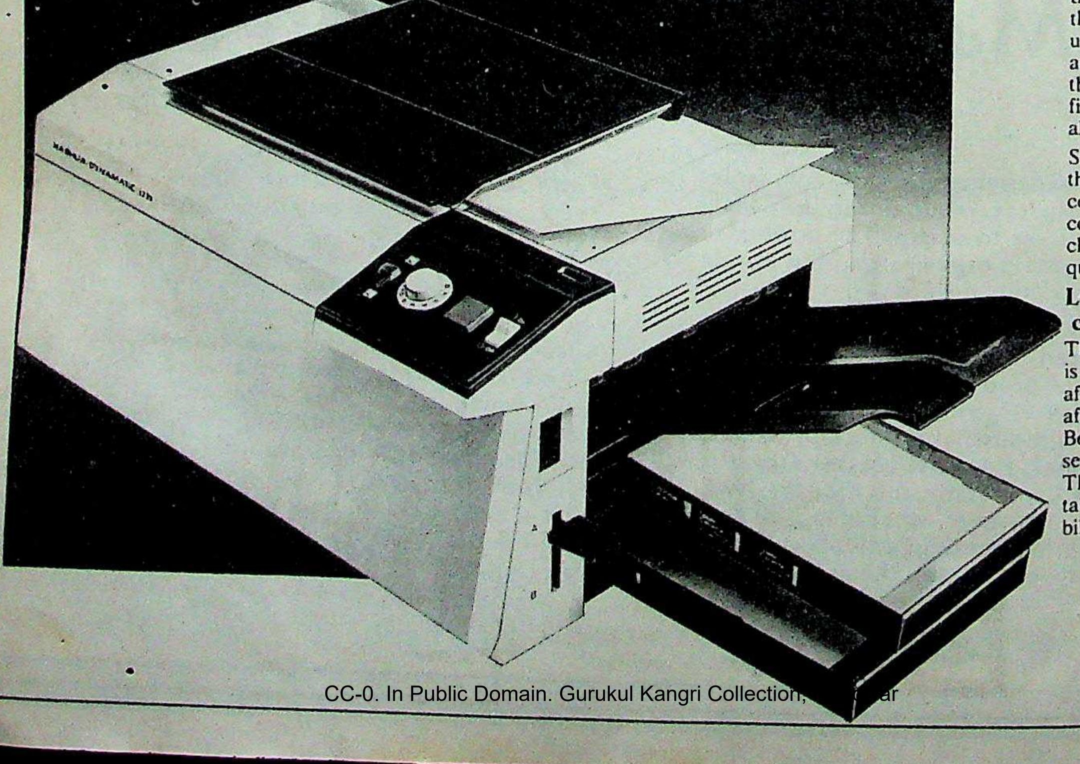

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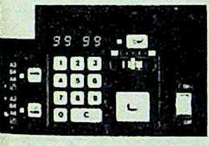

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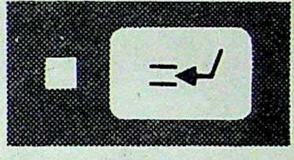

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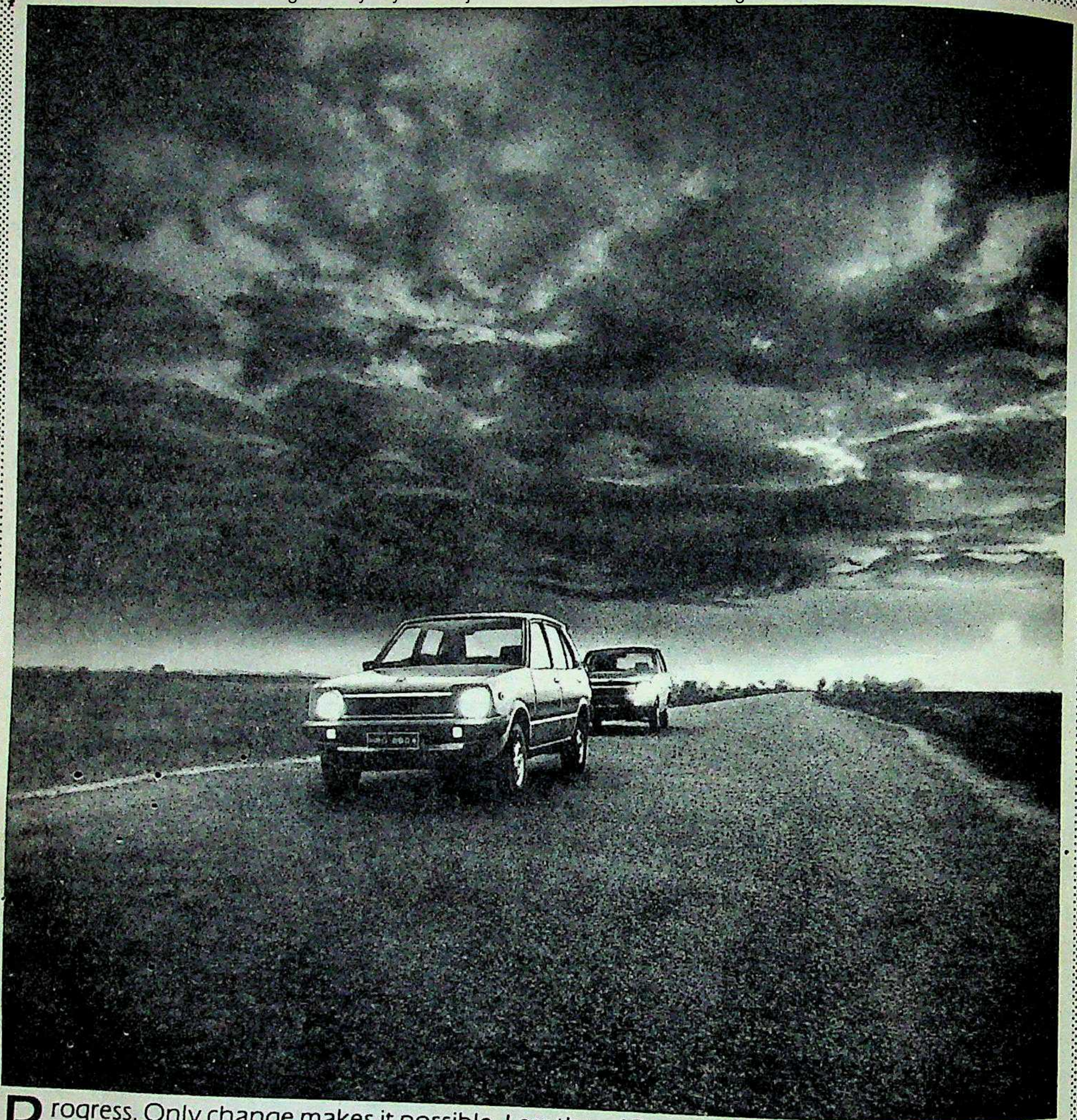

Progress. Only change makes it possible. Less than 12 months from now, the first cars and light commercial vehicles from Maruti Udyog Limited will roll out. Vehicles which will change the face and pace of road transportation in India. Vehicles using the technology of the 80s under the terms of agreement Maruti has made with the Suzuki Motor Company of Japan. Highlights of the collaboration: Maruti will manufacture vehicles which are now being made and sold worldwide by Suzuki. All improvements and advances which Suzuki makes on these vehicles in Japan will be made available to Maruti for the next decade. Uniquely, the President of Suzuki will be a member of Maruti's Board of Directors. Suzuki's equity-holding in Maruti will be a minimum of 26%—symbolic of their commitment to the venture. Suzuki will train production and service personnel in Japan. A senior technical director from Suzuki will be full time on Maruti's Board, in charge of production. Two service specialists from Suzuki will also be present to help maintain the international standards of Suzuki's customer service. Fact: in a single sweep, Maruti will bring about a revolution on wheels. It's already begun.

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Peerless Money Spinner

OW MANY people would invest their savings in a private company that offers a lower rate of interest than the banks, pockets a the savings deposits for administra- ts and refuses to return the savings ertain circumstances? The answer is on people, and their deposits total 300 crore.

a private savings compa- Peerless General Finance estment Co Ltd controls oney than many nation- anks. Even the mammoth urance Corporation (LIC) as competition. But the a-based Peerless, now the non-banking savings y in the country, is under from a formidable trio: st Bengal Government, serve Bank and the LIC, en the Central Govern- ow beginning to take inte- the matter.

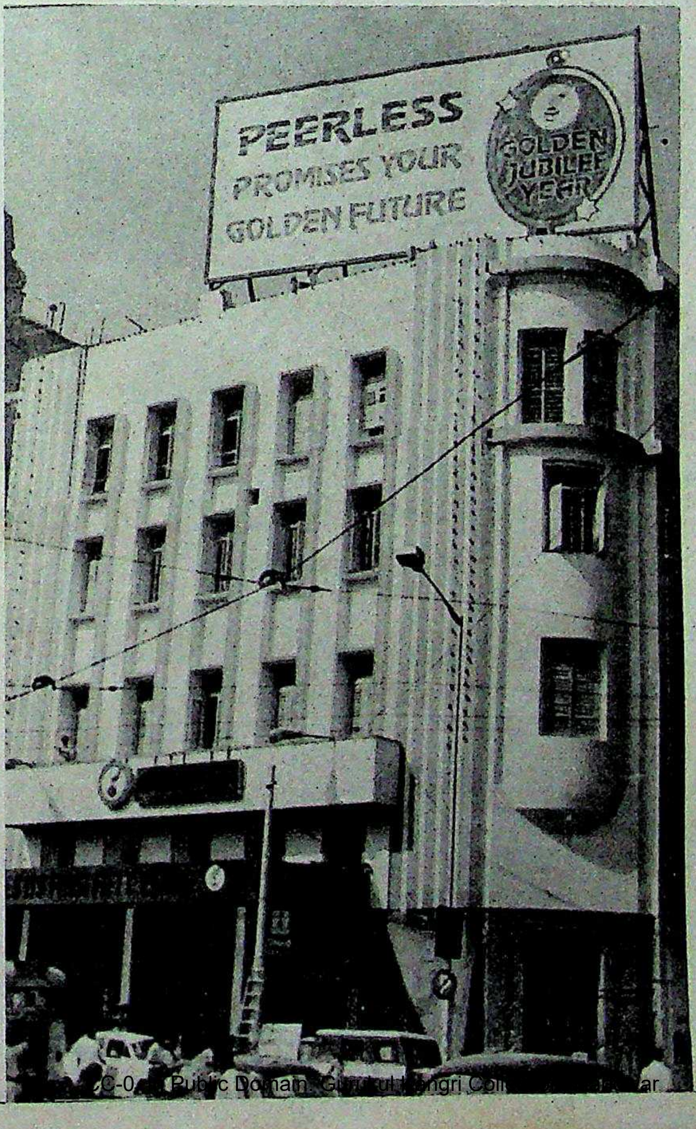
e ball was set rolling by a Bank study of Peerless me ago, which came up series of disturbing fin- n 1979, the West Bengal ment stepped into the act, o curb the company's acti- nder the provisions of the hits and Money Circula- chemes (Banning) Act. s promptly took the issue , arguing that its activities come under the purview act. The court case conti-

ntroversial Schemes: hile, LIC had been repea- essing the Centre to take at would prevent Peerless assing off its savings sche- the equivalent of LIC poli- nd last month, the Centre seemed to be paying heed, ports of directives being to the General Insurance ation not to extend acci- nsurance cover through s to its deposit-certificate s.

he central charge against s is that it is duping its mil- depositors in a variety of by purveying savings schemes as "insurance policies", enticing customers with misleading promotional literature, and not returning money to more than a third of its depositors.

Peerless Managing Director B.K. Roy appeared visibly irritated at the charges last fortnight. "From the state Government to the LIC and the Reserve Bank, everyone keeps needling us. But have they been able to prove any of the charges? Are our depositors fools that they should come flocking to us with their money if they thought that their savings would be lost, or that we were not being fair to them?"

The central charge against Peerless is that it is duping its millions of depositors in a variety of ways: by purveying savings schemes as "insurance policies", enticing customers with misleading promotional literature and not returning money to more than a third of its depositors.



As the controversy rages, both Peerless and LIC have taken the issue to the public. In large newspaper advertisements, Peerless listed 13 "facts" which defended the company's record. The company said that the certificate-holders' money had been invested with the Government, that it created self-employment for 3.5 lakh people (the company's canvassing agents), that Peerless was spreading the savings habit, and that the small man's savings were totally secure with Peerless.

In retaliation, LIC brought out its own advertisements listing the advantages of life insurance policies over "some savings schemes", and highlighted income tax exemptions, the availability of loans against policies, and the cast-iron security of money given to LIC. The advertisements closed with the punch line: "There is no substitute for life insurance."

Financial Proposition: Peerless's business proposition is simple: invest money with the company for a contracted period of years and the company in turn invests this in government securities and the nationalised banks, paying the depositor a "moderate" rate of interest. Emphasising the safety of such investments, Roy says: "We can withdraw the money only with the consent of the Reserve Bank of India, and such consent is available only at the time of making payment to certificate holders. Can there be any better protection for public money?" The depositor also gets insured against death through accidents.

On paper, Peerless's claims sound very good. But private savings companies in India have a colourful record, and when the Reserve Bank undertook its study of Peerless's operations, it came up with some unexpected findings. One startling discovery was that up to 48 per cent of the

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Ten Super Conveniences:

● 4 band Radio	:	FM/MW/SW 1/SW 2
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rtificates lapsed within two years tarted. And, according to the com- les, money deposited against the s lapsed and would ordinarily not ed to the depositor. In other words, lf the depositors lose their money. more significant discovery was the the high rate of drop-outs among itors. Peerless's canvassing agents rungs in the ladder get a total com- f 70 per cent of the initial deposit, 5 per cent of subsequent deposits. , the agents' efforts were aimed at g up fresh customers, not at ensu- the existing certificates continued psing. The company's interest was g on the side of a high lapse ratio, way it kept the money that had d. Some depositors have even ed that agents tend to positively e them if they want to make re- posits that will keep their certifi- e.

otional Style: A second charge ainst Peerless is that it gives its chemes the colour of life insu- icies—first by using terminolo- onally used in the life insurance (endowment, paid-up value, value, and so on), and then by promotional literature that com- rless schemes with those of LIC. . Peerless is not in a position to nsurance; all it offers is accident cover, under an arrangement General Insurance Corporation. a third charge is that the com- ows accounting procedures that e its liability to its depositors—a de by the Reserve Bank study covered that the first year's de- re not shown in the books as lia- the depositor but as revenue to any. This immediately brought tion Peerless's overriding claim ts deposit liabilities were more vered by its investments in ent securities and the banks.

STMENT columnist A.N. bhag put Peerless deposit schemes the microscope recently, and came the conclusion that Peerless's claim g better returns than LIC were not further that the effective rate of int- ered by Peerless was less than 8 per inst 11 per cent by the banks and re by public sector companies). made the still more damaging t the accident insurance extended ss to its deposit-certificate holders to nothing, and that any depositor such insurance cover directly, at cost, from the General Insurance ion. Concluded Shanbhag: "The modus operandi of Peerless in hooking gullible investors is an excellent example of unscrupulousness within the walls of the law."

Roy has his answers to all the charges, even if they are not fully convincing. Admitting that a large proportion of the deposit schemes lapse, he argues that this rate of lapsing is not much higher than LIC's. "If we are accused of thriving on lapses, what about the LIC's?" he asks.

Charges Answered: Defending the company's accounting policies, which had drawn fire from the Reserve Bank, Roy said with disarming candour: "If people subscribing to us agree to this clause in the contract (by which they automatically forfeit the first year's deposit), why should anybody else object? This money is basically used to meet expenses on agents' commissions and on our establishment."

"Are our depositors fools that they should come flocking to us with their money if they thought that their savings would be lost, or that we were not being fair to them?"

—B.K. ROY
Managing Director, Peerless

Roy also made a virtue of the low interest rates offered by the company: "The rate of return is comparatively low, but security is total. Unlike some others, we never promise interest at rates of 36 and 48 per cent, and then dabble in high-risk investments to make such payments possible." As for the use of insurance terminology for what is essentially a savings scheme, Roy said: "The English language is nobody's monopoly, and how can anyone object to our using the same terms as LIC?"

Roy dismissed the suggestion that the company was thriving on the ignorance of depositors (most of them poor people in the rural areas) who were taken in by this insurance terminology, and therefore overlooked the fact that they were getting poor returns on their savings while running the risk of forfeiting the savings to boot.

But these are questions of morality, and Peerless's future will be decided by legality. The Reserve Bank study did not unearth anything that could be used against the company as a legal handle. Indeed, Peerless officials like to point out that in an affidavit filed by the Reserve Bank in the Calcutta High Court in 1978, it said: "The financial position of Peerless is satisfactory. It will be seen from the balance sheet that the cash and other balances in current account along with the investments in government and other securities, short-term and fixed deposits with other banks are more than sufficient to meet the contractual obligations."

The company explains the Reserve Bank's subsequent change of attitude as a case of discovering that Peerless had grown bigger than many banks but could not be regulated. "This caused a lot of heart-burning, while LIC also started campaigning against us."

Crucial Case: Roy seemed to be banking last fortnight on the hope that the High Court would rule favourably on whether the company could be classified as a prize chit or money circulating scheme, so that the state Government would then have no handle to use against the company.

At the same time, conscious of demands in Parliament for nationalising the company and making sure of the safety of the depositors' funds, the company has been assiduously cultivating people in the Finance Ministry to ensure that no punitive action is taken. This, however, has not been able to prevent moves initiated to stop the General Insurance Corporation from extending accident insurance cover to deposit-certificate holders through Peerless. Without such insurance cover, Peerless operations will be revealed as little more than ordinary savings schemes offering rather poor rates of return.

Roy insisted last fortnight that there was no law that stood in the way of the company's present style of operations. But with the adverse publicity thrown up by the controversy, and the spotlight focussed on the poor returns offered on deposits with Peerless, at least some prospective customers would have turned away from the company in recent weeks. As a result Peerless' rapid growth to become the country's leading private savings company may well slow down.

—T.N. NINAN with SUMANTA SEN

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Never
talk
about a
failure

Pratibha-83-72

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Take the Donimalai Iron Ore Project, to cite just one example.

In 1972, National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd. placed an order for conveyors for the Donimalai Iron Ore Project with a major engineering firm. The engineering firm in turn asked KEC to supply the eight motors as per IS:325 for a conveyor system.

Within months, both the motors and the conveyors went into action. Everything was hunky-dory till 1976/77 when KEC started receiving complaints about failures. The problems were serious: rotor lead coming off, fan breakage, endshield explosion due to fan breakage.

What was going on? How come all of a sudden everthing was coming apart? Had we got the specs all wrong? We checked and re-checked. We had followed the conveyor systems manufacturer's specs to the minutest details. We were in the clear.

KEC could now wash its hands off the affair. Instead, we sent a team of design, service and quality assurance engineers to the site.

Electric motors or drives don't work in isolation. They are part of a total system like the conveyor in this instance. They must be designed to match not only the other components of the system but all the peculiar environmental stresses and strains that the system is subjected to.

The motors we had supplied, as our team discovered for the first time, were coupled to a conveyor going downhill. Due to frequent power failures in that region, depending on the quantum of ore in the conveyor, the force of gravity would subject the motors to twice the specified speed, 3000 rpm instead of 1500 rpm. The specifications demanded that the motors be able to bear an overspeed of 20% for two minutes. On the contrary, what was happening was that the motors were running at a speed which was a full 100% higher than the rated one.

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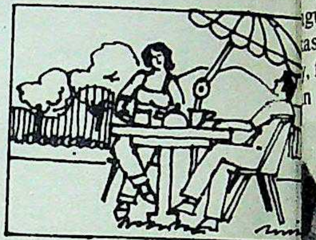

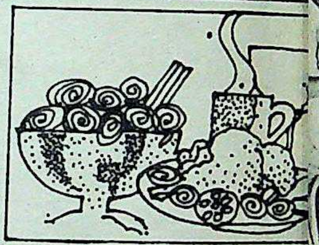

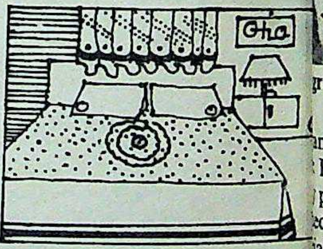

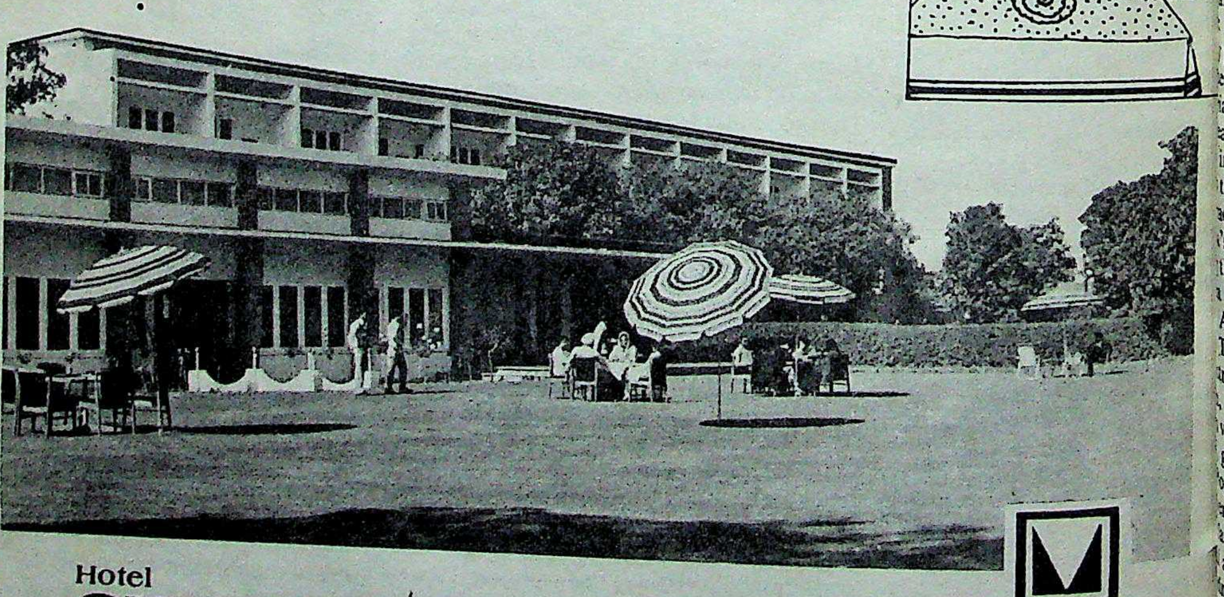

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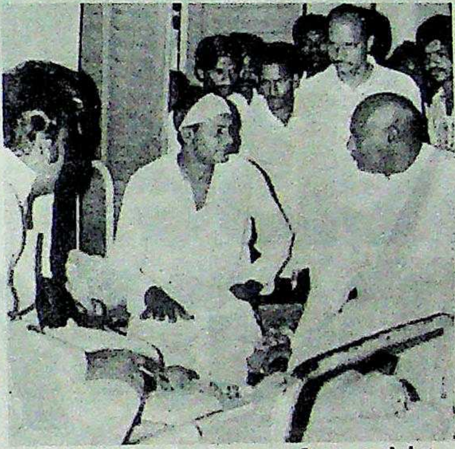
ACCO growers, like cigarette ts, are throwaways." So says amidi Kotaiah Choudhury, 72, cultivating the golden leaf for lf a century in Andhra Pradesh. hundreds of his fellow growers s in a rail and 'rasta roko' agita- what they saw as a buyer's mar- favour of the traders who buy he agitation ended in a bang on hen three farmers died after the n a crowd of stick-wielding gro- guturu, an important trading asam district. Accuses N. Nara- , former Janata Party legislator n of the fact-finding committee nisation for the Protection of Rights: "The farmers did not public or private property. The ed fire without any provocation al orders."



grower Choudhury (left); injured agitator (with bandage): cause for complaint

aths at Tanguturu shocked the in the state capital, Hyderabad, they did growers in the troubled cts. In the Assembly, Telugu 's joined their opposition fellows the growers' case. Chief Minister Rao ordered a judicial enquiry Agriculture Minister K. Jana Tanguturu. The minister asked ra police sent to Tanguturu be as he feared that the farmers violent. Says Vasireddy Mallikar- general secretary of the Andhra ogaku Utpathi Darula Sangham rs' association): "With the kil- rmers seem reluctant to continue agitation."

minatory System: The deaths ht into sharper focus the plight of . Tobacco grows in less than 1 per cent of the total cultivated area of the country but fetches more than Rs 750 crore in excise duty, and Rs 200 crore in foreign exchange. The farmers now want a bigger share of this cake. Explains Mallikarjuna Rao: "There is a 30 per cent increase in costs and 40 per cent increase in yield. This is enough reason to give the farmers higher prices."

Telugu Desam leader Yelimanchili Shivaji argues: "Traders make the most with the least investment. A kilo of tobacco can be used to make 1,000 cigarettes. It is evident that the gap between the price farmers get for a kilo and what the smoker pays for the better brands of Indian cigarettes is very wide." The traders, on the other hand, say that the growers are paid reasonable prices, as the quality of the leaf is important.

A production glut has not helped matters. About 140 million kg has been produced, of which as much as 45 million kg is low grade—used only by Indian cigarette manufacturers—because the crop was prey to erratic weather conditions earlier in the season. The amount of low grade tobacco is almost double that last year. The Central and state buying agencies are reluctant to purchase the low grade tobacco because it has no export value. As for the rest of the crop, the lack of firm orders from foreign buyers is another disconcerting factor. Traders aggravate the situation by delaying their purchases in the hope that prices will fall.

Bargain Prices: The pricing structure is flexible. The Tobacco Board, a Central Government authority, suggests indication prices for seven grades of tobacco to serve as a starting point for the bargaining between growers and traders. The prices are not mandatory and the bargaining often throws up lower prices. This year, for instance, the Tobacco Board indicated Rs 14.25 a kg for the top grade of tobacco leaf. The traders offered Rs 13.50. Rama Rao intervened and the indication price was settled at Rs 14.

But the agreement broke down. After the Tanguturu incident, Commerce Minister V.P. Singh announced on March 17 that the Central State Trading Corporation (STC) would buy the top grades at the indication prices. A week later, on March 24, cigarette manufacturers also agreed to buy low grade tobacco at the indication prices. In addition, the Andhra Pradesh STC offered to buy 4 million kg of high grade tobacco. Complains Shivaji: "None of the agencies began buying till April 3. Growers, worried that the quality of the leaf would deteriorate, sold the tobacco at depressed prices. The top grade was sold for Rs 7 a kg and the lowest for Rs 1.50."

It was only on April 2 that Commerce Minister Singh announced that the Central STC would also buy low grade tobacco. The growers' plight has worsened, as the traders have also delayed payment. According to Tobacco Board rules 60 per cent of the value must be paid within 10 days of purchase and the rest in 90 days, with interest calculated at 14 per cent. Now the growers are being asked to wait for six months.

Suggests Tobacco Board Chairman K.G. Mahapatra: "There is need for a specialised state agency dealing in tobacco. This can help stabilise prices and production." Some traders feel that the cigarette makers should also be covered by the Tobacco Board rules if any pricing system is to be effective: some cigarette manufacturers now buy their tobacco through petty traders who exploit the small farmers. Thus the leaf that cheers continues to be the cause of much heartburn.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

THE MARKETS

Low Stocks

FIVE weeks after the budget, the stock market doesn't know whether it is coming or going. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee seems to have done a Charan Singh, knocking the bottom from under the market by a few well-aimed swipes first, at the zero-tax companies, and second, at all those companies whose advertisement and travel bills the minister considers as extravagant. By the look of things, there is little chance that the minister will relent on these two measures, and if he doesn't, the market has very little to lean on.

Share prices are down all the way, chemicals, fertilisers and paper having apparently suffered the most. In fact, only engineering shares seem to have escaped unhurt though their time may also come.

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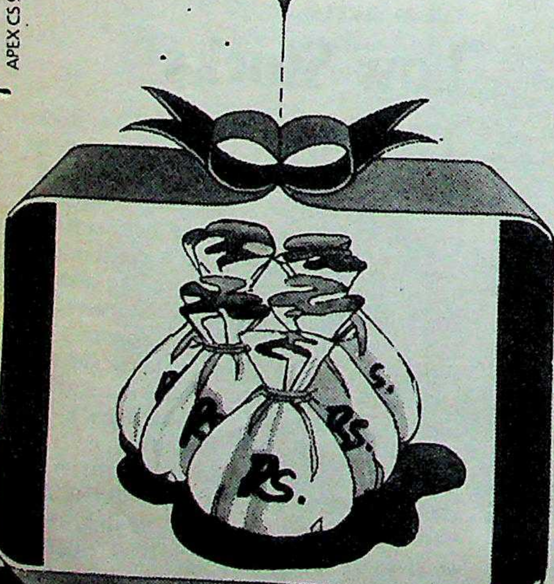
money with
somebody
else's
money



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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low 1983	Close 4.4.83	Change on Fortnight
arabhai	17.75	14.00	14.00	(0.25)
land	36.50	31.25	32.50	(0.25)
ats	35.00	31.50	32.00	(0.50)
Cement	406.00	350.00	358.50	(8.50)
	1,200.00	1,025.00	1,080.00	10.00
	42.80	38.00	38.50	(1.25)
ayon	257.00	210.00	213.50	(4.50)
	54.60	47.60	53.10	1.20
yeing	75.00	57.50	63.50	(1.50)
nd.	28.20	26.60	26.90	(0.80)
lls	246.50	190.00	196.00	4.50
s	205.50	195.00	205.00	nil
pinning	810.00	695.00	752.50	(10.00)
ndia	57.50	51.00	54.75	nil
	94.00	84.00	90.00	nil
th Mills	65.75	32.31	63.81	(0.94)
dia	23.70	20.10	22.10	(1.60)
Hotels	22.00	20.75	20.75	nil
	57.50	39.75	55.00	(2.50)
	31.50	21.50	21.50	(1.50)
n Williams	21.75	19.10	19.30	(0.20)
ertilisers	490.00	429.00	441.00	(2.00)
ayon	52.00	45.00	46.00	(1.00)
Aluminium	38.75	32.10	35.25	(0.95)
Lever	56.50	53.00	53.00	(0.50)
Motors	35.10	27.84	28.52	(1.78)
minium	20.00	16.90	16.90	(1.10)
ble	23.00	21.80	22.15	0.05
plosives	26.20	22.10	23.80	(2.30)
ganic	33.50	25.50	29.00	(1.00)
ygen.	34.50	31.30	32.50	(0.60)
-Rand	87.00	82.00	83.00	nil
	44.85	34.80	35.50	(0.80)
Tea	28.10	20.35	24.50	(0.70)
thetics	57.50	34.50	37.10	0.30
ngineering	85.00	68.00	75.00	1.00
r	87.00	75.00	75.00	nil
	65.40	57.30	64.75	0.75
ngineering	163.00	70.00	70.00	(4.00)
Madras)	24.00	18.50	20.00	(3.50)
Toubro	57.50	52.00	52.00	(1.50)
chines	60.25	42.50	60.00	7.25
Coats	22.60	17.25	17.25	(0.75)
& Mahindra	56.00	42.00	45.00	1.00
bber	26.69	22.69	25.87	1.67
dustries	257.50	235.00	235.00	(6.25)
Iron	24.00	20.00	20.75	0.50
	26.00	20.50	20.50	(0.75)
Organic	207.50	167.50	170.00	(13.75)
	39.25	34.00	34.25	(0.50)
aper	47.10	40.90	40.90	(1.70)
ctronics	29.25	24.80	25.00	(2.25)
Auto	376.00	243.00	249.50	(22.50)
	40.75	36.00	36.75	(0.50)
	183.00	162.00	172.00	(4.00)
n Rand	22.25	19.00	19.81	(0.06)
allace	39.05	33.20	37.50	(0.50)
Fibres	32.12	27.75	31.19	0.44
	17.50	15.25	16.00	0.20
roducts	46.80	38.30	38.30	(1.95)
micals	67.00	52.00	53.00	(3.50)
el	301.50	237.00	256.00	11.00
	455.00	350.00	363.00	(11.00)
	45.00	38.60	38.80	(1.95)
stments	18.00	16.00	17.60	0.10
Carbide	25.10	22.25	22.50	(1.50)
artin Black	24.80	22.00	22.50	(0.50)
Sperry	20.50	16.50	18.00	nil
	283.00	262.00	268.00	(3.00)
dasagar	19.50	15.00	15.00	nil
gro	26.20	22.40	25.75	0.15
(sale)	13.95	13.60	13.95	0.15

The market is now very close to last year's level, all the gains in between having been completely wiped out. Corporate reports are not all that encouraging either. National Organic has produced most disappointing reports with profits down more than 50 per cent from Rs 12 crore to Rs 5 crore. A large number of textile mills in Bombay are raring to go but cannot do much as long as the stalemate continues.

The only silver lining is the report that public sector units have done much better than usual this year, with sales and turnover up by 15 per cent. If this is true, then the outlook for private sector units cannot be all that dark and it is probably just a question of time—may be three months, may be four—before they too begin to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

Resilient: Fears of crash are however exaggerated. Indian companies are very resilient and can take the worst knocks without flinching. Despite three changes in government at the Centre since 1977 and umpteen changes at state level, the stock markets have not done too badly. In fact, they have done much better than commodities. With weather experts expecting a better monsoon and a downturn in world oil prices—with the consequent upturn in world trade—the overall economic situation is likely to improve rather than deteriorate in the near future. In fact, the price index has been going up for the last few weeks, which is a sign that the demand-supply situation is veering in favour of the corporate sector. A little inflation always does wonders for company profits.

March and April are generally poor months for the stock market—March, because of the budget and, April, because of paucity of resources after the taxman has taken his share—but things should start looking up next month unless some of the controversial budget measures turn out to be far more disruptive than they should. Investors should be well advised to hold their horses until then, but if they do happen to have itchy fingers, they may try their luck with quite a few scrips that are still quite attractive, though rather high-priced. Shriram Fibres, Hindustan Lever and Asian Paints have more or less held their own in a falling market and so has Ceat Tyres.

Ceat, now a Goenka group company, is diversifying into telephone cables, a profitable line. Usha Martin Black, somewhat pushed to the sidelines, is hovering around Rs 20 but should make a comeback this year. In fact, most blue chips seem to have come through the recession largely unscathed with no more than a slight dent here and there. This is as good an indication as any that the market should spring back into shape as soon as the present clouds are lifted.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit	Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	8.7412	8.6441
Austria	100	As Sch.	59.3316	58.7056
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.9790	26.7746
Bangladesh	100	Taka	42.3064	41.9860
Canada	1	Can $	8.1654	8.0771
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.2662	12.1733
France	1	Fr Frc	1.3892	1.3743
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5043	1.4871
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4481	1.4371
Iran	100	Rial	11.9159	11.8256
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.6936	0.6864
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.2497	4.1950
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7847	0.7787
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.8916	34.6273
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.3947	4.3463
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8905	0.8837
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7933	0.7843
Netherlands		D Glds	3.6983	3.6588
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.8181	0.7691
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8279	4.7722
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.3418	7.2711
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.7694	0.7636
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3466	1.3330
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8998	4.8418
Tanzania	1	T Sch.	1.0412	1.0333
Thailand	100	Baht	44.4508	44.0508
UK	1	Pound	15.1355	14.9993
USA	1	US $	10.0050	9.9125
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7764	2.7553
USSR	1	Rouble	13.5002	13.3978
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1633	4.1229

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo. Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 6.4.83

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
April 4, 1983	**256.7**	1.4
Cereals	**268.4**	(1.9)
Chemicals	**346.9**	(36.0)
Industrial Fibres	**181.4**	1.7
Metals	**349.4**	(0.7)
Sugar	**199.0**	4.5
Textile Yarns	**221.2**	3.8
Vegetable Oils	**293.9**	1.1
Gold, standard,		
April 4, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	**1,795.00**	15.00
Silver, .999		
April 4, 1983 (Rs per kg)	**3,180.00**	(110.00)
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
April 4, 1983	**233.8**	(7.00)
Cement	**223.9**	(9.4)
Chemicals	**193.3**	(16.7)
Engineering	**402.1**	0.1
Fertilisers	**197.8**	(16.1)
Man-made Fibres	**366.9**	(1.6)
Paper	**440.3**	(26.6)
Rubber Goods	**150.8**	(10.1)

MONEY	per cent
Money Supply, February 25, 1983	**0.4**
Bank Deposits	**0.3**
Foreign Exchange Assets	**(9.5)**

*** 1969–70 = 100**

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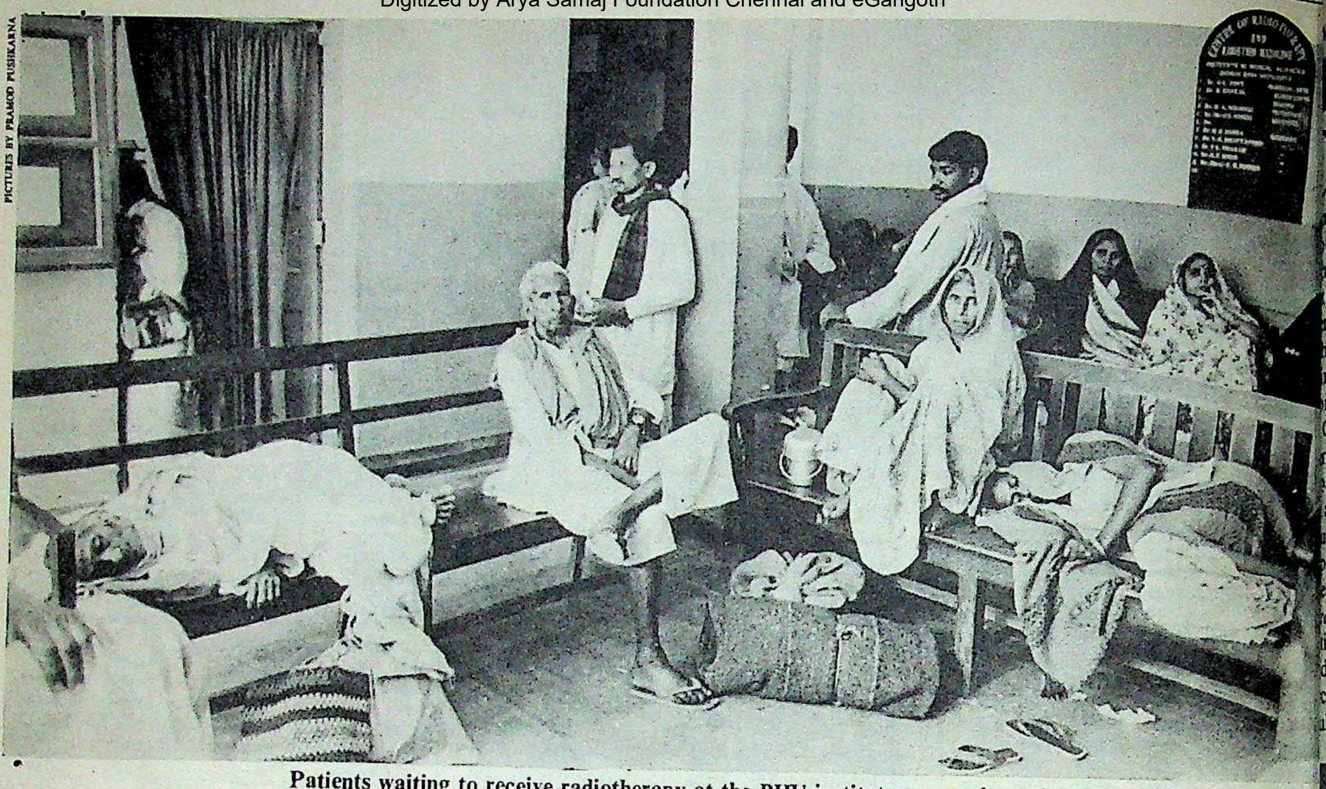
PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Patients waiting to receive radiotherapy at the BHU institute: mysterious disease

BHU INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

The Rays Of Death

- **Marachi Ram,** 45, *was admitted to the hospital with cancer of the cervix, that too in the advanced stages. She was heavily irradiated in May 1980. By August, she was back in the hospital and bleeding heavily at the rectum. She was last checked in October last year; the haemoglobin level of her blood had plummeted to a precarious 20 per cent, and she was still bleeding. The doctors feels she is a broder-line case which might collapse any day.*

- **Vindeshwari Devi,** *mother of seven children, travelled all the way from her native Palamau district in Bihar to Varanasi, where she was admitted to the Institute of Medical Sciences of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) for radiotherapy of cancer of the uterine cervix. She was irradiated on January 17, 1981, and went home a few weeks later after the doctors had certified that she had been cured of cancer.*

  Within a month, however, she came back to the hospital with severe backache and nausea; she also had difficulty in passing stools and urine. She bled profusely at the rectum, and doctors at the institute found that her cervix had become a putrid mass of dead tissue. The hospital did not hear from her after that. It was only in December that year that her husband, A. Vishwakarma, sent a postcard to a doctor in the department, saying that his wife had died in August. "She bled to death," the husband wrote.

- **Ashrafi Devi,** 35, *and mother of t resident of village Khatipur in Ghazipu trict, was similarly irradiated on July 1 August 29 in 1980. As a result the mali tumour on the cervix was successfully troyed. Back home after the treatment, problems arose. In 1981 she began to profusely at the rectum, and doctors a institute discovered that her urinary pa was choked, a condition known as fib. The affliction is incurable—and terr*

VINDESHWARI Devi, Ashrafi Devi, and Marachi Ram are only three of over 200 similar cases, patients at the institute's Radiotherapy Department. They come from all over: Gorakhpur and the Nepal Terai in the north, Balia and Palamau in the east, and from villages spread over the vast Indo-Gangetic plain in Uttar Pradesh. The anaemic pallor of their faces strikes even the untrained eye. If the lower eyelid is pulled down, the membrane underneath is as pallid as blotting paper. Their unhealthily pale bodies lose in spasms every day more blood than they can replace. Some of their sister sufferers have already bled to death. Others await the same fate, or at best a decrepit existence.

At the root of their suffering is not the dreaded cancer they have all suffered; it is in all probability a man-made affliction that has progressively converted their excretory organs into a putrid mass of necrotic ti causing chronic bleeding, excruciating prolonged pain, and in some cases, d Most of them are too ignorant to kno but the disease was in all probability im ted in them in the course of their treat for cancer, at the Radiotherapy Depart of the institute, the largest hospital compl the region (960 beds). In its early stages, ra tion from radioactive sources like cobalt "burn" cancer cells in the cervix of the us—but radiation has to be precise and deviation can destroy living tissue, espec of the more sensitive nearby rectum. At bleeding can result at worst, death.

The number of times

VICAL CANCER

he Cobalt Cure

ANCER of the uterine cervix is the second largest killer among all cancers in India, 70 per cent of the ns being women. In its magnitude unting to 32 per cent of all cancer s) it is next only to cancer of the h, which afflicts male and female nts alike, and often spreads rapidly e farthest reaches of the gullet, ng localised treatment along its line read.

Cervical cancer, in its early stage, is rally treated by exposing it to active radiation. The cobalt isotope an atomic weight of 60 is applied as rce in three rod-like applicator that ushed through the vagina, and are to rest at the level of the cervix (*see am*). The cobalt sources are held in ion by two rubber spheres, known as ds. The radiation emitting from the ces and seeping through the ovoids is lated by a chart drawn on the basis he 'half-life' of cobalt (the time re- red for one half of the radioactive ope to decay), which is 5.2 years. The ngth is therefore updated periodically, allowing for the sources' decay.

Uterine and vaginal tissue can with- d high applications of radiation, a perty that has made radiotherapy of ical cancer possible. It can absorb ation up to 15,000 and, in certain es, 20,000 rads, the rad being equiva- to the absorption of 100 ergs of gy per gramme of absorbing material hest X-ray, by comparison, involves than 1 rad). But the adjoining tissue he rectum, which is only a thin wall of cle away from the cervix of the us, and the urinary bladder, which is in the neighbourhood, have much lower radiation tolerance—about 6,500 rads. And that is where the catch lies.

Overdose Dangers: In the event of radiation overdose, the excess radiation dripping out of the uterine cervix onto the rectum and the urinary bladder brings about certain drastic and occasionally irreversible changes in their cells. It leads to the growth of 'abnormal' cells which grow faster than the normal cells, causing a preliminary hardening of these organs (fibrosis). Then a network of fragile blood vessels rapidly forms over the affected part (neo-vascularisation). The vessels rupture at the slightest friction, leading to first intermittent, and then prolonged bleeding.

Radiotherapists treating cervical cancer go by Ralston Paterson's 1961 manual which prescribes that radiation at 'Point A' (a defined point on the uterus) should not overstep the following limits:

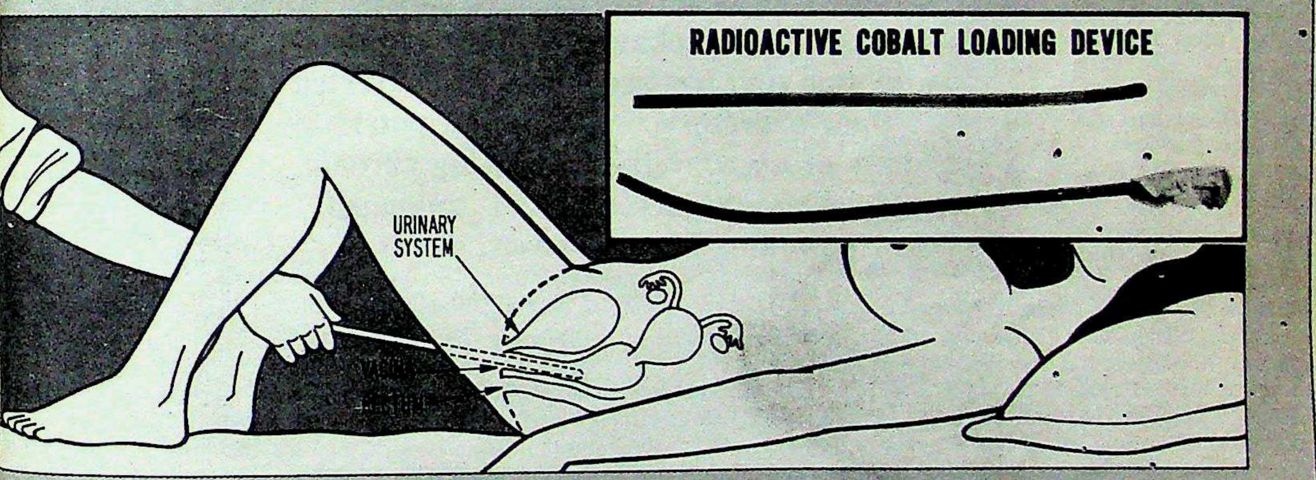
- ► 4,000 Rontgen or r (roughly equivalent to 4,000 rads) at Point A in three days;
- ► rest for 4 to 7 days; and
- ► another 4,000 r at Point A in three days.

It is clear that Paterson advises not only against irradiating Point A with more than 8,000 r in one treatment but he also sets a formula for its staggering. However, at the BHU institute there are examples of patients being administered more than 10,000 r in one treatment, and then being given beam therapy from external cobalt sources. In a large number of these cases, Point A has been irradiated with 1,000 r to 1,500 r in excess of the prescribed 4,000 r at one go. One natural consequence is rectal bleeding and progressive ulceration of the organs, finally giving rise to a *recto-vesico-vaginal fistula*, or joining up of the rectum, the urinary bladder and the vagina by interconnected cavities.

Safeguards: The first precaution against radiation overdose is obviously to go strictly by the manual. But even a pre-calculation is not enough, because there is no knowing if the sources are emitting the ionised particles along their expected paths of emission, or up to their expected strength. To check it, radiotherapists enforce a routine check on the residual radiation at the rectum by a technique known as rectal dosimetry. As soon as the radiation level at the rectum threatens to cross the threshold level, the sources are withdrawn.

Together with rectal dosimetry, radiation also involves X-ray filming of the sources *in situ*, so that whenever the sources make a dangerously odd angle to the cervix, the defect can be corrected. A further safeguard is to pack the vaginal wall with soft materials at the time of the application, so that the muscles are distended and the distance between the sources and the rectum (lying right behind the vagina) is increased. Intensity of radiation follows the 'inverse square law', that is, it varies inversely with the square of the distance between the point of measurement and the source. The 'packing' can be properly done only when the patient is under general anaesthesia and is able to offer no resistance.

Without these safeguards, the rectum and the bladder are liable to receive radiation 'burns'. In most cases it takes the form of the patient losing blood at frequent intervals. Secondary afflictions, like infection due to low haemoglobin, catch up with her. Cardiac problems arise because the heart has to pump more vigorously to make up for the low oxygen content of the blood. The end comes with a whimper.



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radiotherapy at the institute has led to radiation reaction is alarmingly high. Of the 738 patients who underwent radiotherapy for cancer of the cervix in 1980 and 1981, the department's records show that 155 came back with rectal bleeding, a form of radiation reaction. This figure does not include the 'drop-outs' who did not return to the hospital for follow-up tests. Such drop-outs are not only patients fortunate to have no complications but also those too poor to undertake repeated trips to the hospital from their homes which are often at quite a distance from Varanasi.

Particularly high was the figure for patients of early-stage cancer stricken with radiation reaction. Of the 155 cases detected in 1980 and 1981, 101 had early-stage cancer which is usually curable. Making allowance for the drop-outs, it appears possible that as many as one out of every three patients irradiated for cancer of the uterine cervix ended up with radiation reaction.

The proportion is unheard of elsewhere in India and signifies a deep malaise. Rectal bleeding does not ordinarily take place following irradiation of cervical cancer and it is regarded as a major crisis. “When such cases do occur,” said Ashim Kumar Bose, head of the Radiotherapy Department of New Delhi's Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan Hospital, “the department is expected to suspend all suspect radiation therapy, sit back and analyse what is at fault — the man or the machine.”

At the root of their suffering is not the dreaded cancer; it is in all probability a man-made affliction that has progressively converted their excretory organs into a putrid mass of necrotic tissue, causing chronic bleeding, excruciating and prolonged pain and, in some cases, death.

Checks Disregarded: The trouble at the institute's Radiotherapy Department is that the mandatory safeguards to check over-irradiation are often flouted. The level of radiation at the rectum, which can be measured without any difficulty by a thermometer-like gauge, called a rectal dosimeter, is mostly not monitored. As a result, even when radiation at the rectum crosses the threshold limit because of wrong dosing or incorrect positioning of the cobalt sources, there is no means of ascertaining this.

The dose at 'Point A', a defined point on the uterus, is always maintained at a particular level. According to Ralston Paterson's classic manual of radiotherapy, it should never exceed 8,000 rads (a rad is the unit of radiation) over a fortnight (*see box*); and the amount should be applied in at least two equal instalments of 4,000 rads each. But the institute often violates this limit. Examples:

- ▶ Mankuwari Devi (dept No. 658/80), admitted on April 29, 1980, was given 10,094 rads in three weeks. As a result she reported to the hospital on September 24, 1980, with heavy rectal bleeding.
- ▶ Sursati Devi (dept. No. 719/80), was given 9,302 rads between July 5 and July 7, 1981. She began bleeding at the rectum on September 2.
- ▶ Kamala Devi (dept. No. 564/80), was given 10,300 rads between May 20 and June 20, 1980. Her rectal bleeding began on August 20, 1980.

It is also mandatory to take X-ray films while the application is on, because only an X-ray film can tell if the sources are positioned properly. But such films are generally not made at the institute for reasons that appear petty considering their importance. Said M.S. Agarwal, the physicist in charge of the department's sophisticated radiation units: “We have to apply radiotherapy without X-ray check-filming because of bottlenecks in the Radiology Department where the filming has to be done. Sometimes X-ray cameras are not free. Sometimes no stretcher is available. And, even when the stretcher is available, we don't have a man to carry the stretcher to the radiology department.”

Yet another routine safeguard is to pack the space between the sources of radiation and the wall that separates the vagina from the rectum with pieces of cotton gauze. The packing increases the distance betwe sources and the rectum, and minimis effect of radiation on it. In order to do s essential to administer general anaest because only this can ensure the deg relaxation at which packing is effectiv doctors at the department hardly ever for it, and short-circuit this requiremen simpler local anaesthesia.

Manoj Sharma: startling exposé

Dangerous Doses: The departmen cords are also replete with instances of dose. Manoj Sharma, an intrepid in the department crusading agains incorrect methods, believes that th tients at the institute are not only over but that doses within the prescribed often turn dangerous because of inc application methods. Sharma gave a fr ning account of such misapplication recent letter to several eminent radiatic cologists of the country. Wrote Sh “What is going on in the name of radi therapy here (at the institute) is nothin calculated murder of pat Instead of healing cance patients are being pres with another disease. Thi criminal offence.”

Kamal Sahni, the radiotherapist in charg the department since last dismissed out of hand the gation that the patients being overdosed. “The we textbooks are hardly a gui the proper dose of radiat Sahni said in a cocksure ner, “because cancer of cervix is not a disease o West. Since it is prevalent in India we ha work out the doses and the tolerance here.” But patients receiving radiatio excess of the limits prescribed by the we manuals have already suffered reaction *box*). And, while Indian standards are st the process of being worked out by S and her colleagues, there is every possi of patients becoming guinea-pigs.

Anaesthetic Failure: Sahni main that “most of our patients” receive ge anaesthesia; that rectal dosimeters are quently applied”; and that X-ray check are “often taken”. The records however quite different story. Out of a random pling of 24 cases between April 4 and Ju last year, general anaesthesia was give only four cases and rectal dosimetry was in only seven cases. Scores of case files, mined by INDIA TODAY, made no mentio the X-ray check films. Observed Vishwa Shanta, one of the country's best-kn cancer specialists and a director of the pr gious Cancer Institute at Adyar in Mad “It is unthinkable that intra-cavitary co radiation can be applied to the ut

orror Stories

AMARAVATI Mishra, Hospital ticket number 879/80, of Pandeypur in Balia district. Ramdulari i, 404/80, of Khalispur in Ghazipur ct. Shanti Devi, 275/81, who lives in eepers' colony off Mughalsarai's railway yard. Prabhawati Devi, 4/RT, rotting away in her grimy one- tenement flat at Godowlia, in the ow of the famed Vishwanath ple. Gulabi Ram, 1006/80 the im- ilised wife of a retired government oyee living at Paharpur, next to the ric Sarnath *stupa*.

The list goes on. Amaravati and dulari are dead. Others are limping fully towards death, their eyes sunk into the sockets, their fingernails an mic black and their bodies em- ed. The five women had all been itted to the institute's Radiotherapy artment. They were given radiation ancer of the uterine cervix, and were discharged with doctors certifying their "tumour" (the cancerous gro- had been "successfully irradiated". were all stricken with radiation tion, and began to bleed at the um.

Shanti Devi: scarred for life

Amaravati's village of Pandeypur is usty hamlet, swept by hot summer ds, three miles off the main road that Varanasi with Ballia, the eastern- district of Uttar Pradesh. She was 40 her cancer of the cervix was de- ed in 1980. The stage was fairly early. July 21, 1980, she was given a cobalt of 3,000 rads without a safeguard wn as 'central shielding' by which the can be made to zero in on the target. August 19, she was given 1,108 rads in ours; again, on September 2, she was 5,112 rads in 72 hours. Thus in 4 she was administered 9,220 rads.

On February 11, 1981, she revisited the hospital, 160km away from home. Her complaint was typical: massive bleeding at the rectum. Says her husband, Parasnath Mishra, who owns six acres of of land in the village: "I sold a slice of my holdings and pawned my wife's ornaments to raise the money. Her suffering was terrible. She screamed in pain throughout the night."

On May 27, she was advised colostomy (*see story*) by the doctors and was readmitted to the hospital. But by then her haemoglobin count had been reduced to less than 30 per cent against the normal 90 per cent and above. She could not withstand the rigour of an operation. On October 7, a few hours after the operation, she died in the hospital bed.

■ Ramdulari Koeri had her cancer detected at a very early stage. Her railway employee husband, Ramjatan, borrowed some money from their neighbours in Ghazipur, and brought her to Varanasi for treatment. She was administered a total of 9,540 rads between May 5 and June 24, 1980. On her release from the hospital, the doctors testified that her tumour had been "irradiated in full".

However, Ramjatan had to bring her back on March 2, 1981, when she began bleeding at her rectum. She was readmitted to the hospital on April 30, and was put on glucose drip. Her rectal examination report says that the diameter of her rectum has shrunk to 1cm, the normal diameter being 4cm to 5cm. She was released, but the doctors advised a colostomy operation. Ramjatan said: "I had run out of money. The doctors said that the operation would cost Rs 3,000. I did not have Rs 30. She groaned in her bed for three months, until her death."

■ Amaravati and Ramdulari are no more, but Shanti Devi, a 32-year-old housewife who might once have been pretty, still bears the scars of radiation inside her. On July 14 and July 28, 1981, she was given radiation of 5,593 rads, which is strictly within the prescribed limits. It was followed up with 'centrally shielded' cobalt beam therapy, but that too kept the radiation within limits. However, on February 11, 1982, she reported to the hospital with profuse rectal bleeding. She was prescribed blood-forming drugs, costing Rs 50 every day, which she could not afford. The hospital stores do not stock them.

Mother of five children, Shanti Devi lives in a Harijan colony near Mughalsarai railway yard. Her husband, Dayacharan, is a sweeper of the local municipality. He said his wife still bled, "often for a whole week at a stretch". Shanti cannot walk two steps without support. "If you write about my wife, will the sarkar arrange for her treatment?" Dayacharan asked in an agonised voice.

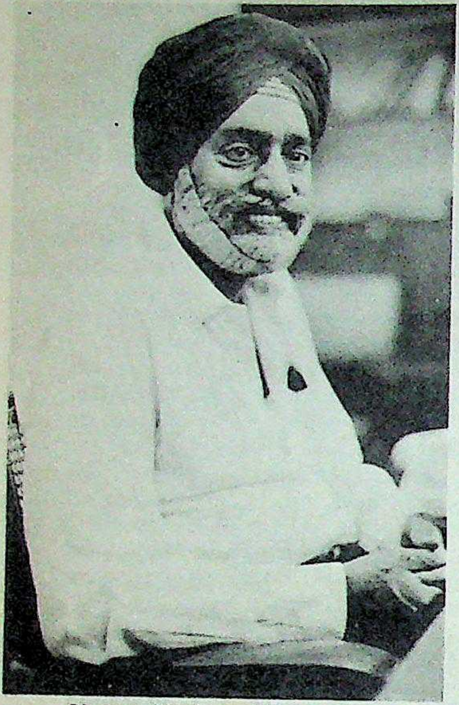
■ Prabhawati Devi lives at Lacchmanpura, a crumble of peeled walls, broken pillars and derelict stairways, at Godowlia, not far from the river front of Varanasi. She was irradiated with roughly 8,428 rads between February 22 and April 7, 1979. She returned to the hospital on June 6, 1979, with rectal bleeding. She served as an ayah at private houses, and she says she had little leisure to report regularly at the hospital.

On February 18, 1982, she was compelled to revisit the hospital. But by then things had gone too far and, as the hospital record says, "the patient has continuous communication between urinary bladder, vagina and rectum." In other words, the walls between these three organs have been perforated. Prabhawati said: "This is death in life. I want to die, simply to die."

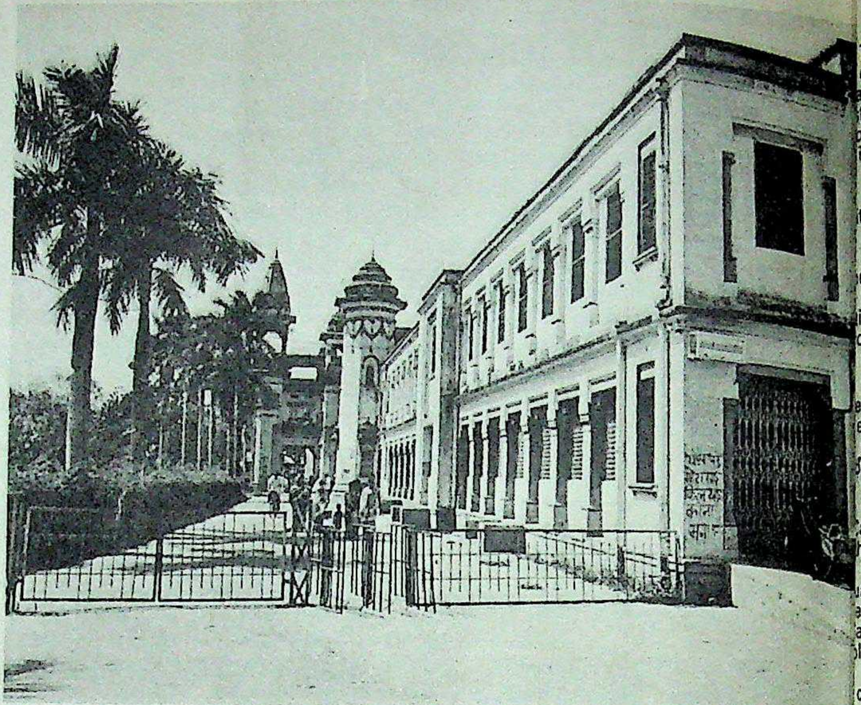
Kamala Devi: painful existence

■ Gulabi Ram, 58, was irradiated with 8,156 rads between September 16 and October 25, 1980. Doctors noted that her cancer growth showed "very satisfactory regression". However, rectal bleeding occurred on May 1, 1981, when she returned to the hospital. On examination, "an ulcer was palpated on the anterior wall of rectum". Significantly, the ulcer had not been "palpated" at the time of the radiation application, when a thorough check had been carried out, a clear evidence of its being caused during radiation.

Says Purushottam Ram, a retired government employee, and Gulabi's husband: "Between May and August that year, I spent Rs 4,000 in drugs and tonics. Yet she wasn't fully cured." She said her feet used to get swollen, and "my eyelids became so heavy that I could not keep them open". Last year, however, her injury, ostensibly caused by radiation, showed signs of regression. She still bleeds, she says, but the uncontrollable spasms have ceased.



Shamer Singh: problems galore



The medical institute building: controversial treatment

without check films. Such a thing will never be allowed in my department."

The Radiotherapy Department at the institute is a box-like building where the gloom of its innards compares with the apathy of the people who run it. Red tape reigns supreme; the doctors are used to passing the buck from individual to individual, and often from department to department. Shamer Singh, the genial-looking director of the institute, said that the radiology department could not ensure X-ray check-filming for each patient because "there is no money. The department gets only a tenth of the funds it needs."

Handicaps: Singh believes that the Radiotherapy Department is doing a "good job, considering the odds". The "odds", according to him, are many: the department does not have a professor; Sahni, who was appointed a reader only last fortnight, had been officiating as the department head even though she was just a lecturer; many postings are made on a makeshift *ad hoc* basis; funds are inadequate; the wards are overcrowded. With such handicaps quality is naturally the first casualty. Said Singh: "There is such a rush of patients that it is not possible to maintain the ideal conditions."

Case files unearthed from the hospital's poorly maintained record section show that there has been a fall in the number of rectal bleeding cases in 1982. But this is by no means an indication that things are getting better, because the department was closed for nearly four months during the year as a result of an employees' strike. Besides, the radioactive cobalt sources used for irradiation, whch had been acquired in 1980, were decaying like all radioactive sources and getting weaker. Incorrect application of the sources in the first two years was therefore more dangerous than applications done later.

From the existing records, at least four cases of death are evident. In at least 15 other cases, doctors have advised a frightfully cumbersome colostomy operation which involves punching a 'second excretory passage' through the abdomen and attaching an external pouch for the excreta. The treatment is socially taboo and is seldom accepted. In fact, seven of the 15 patients advised colostomy have already refused it.

Silent Suffering: In some of the cases, radiation wounds have healed only after administering highly expensive drugs over long periods, the prescriptions often costing as much as Rs 2,000 for 30 days' treatment. The majority of the patients, however, suffer in silence, their life's blood ebbing away in traumatic convulsions, attended to by village quacks, and resigned to their fate.

The reaction has often been noticed to leapfrog with time, often riddling the urinary bladder, the rectum and the vagina with a network of interconnected holes. So faecal matter freely oozes with urine, and both seep down the vaginal passage. This, compounded with regular loss of blood, turns the patient into a mental and physical wreck. As one of them, Mankuwari Devi of Ghazipur, who at 37 looks pale and many years older, admitted: "Twice did I contemplate su The shame is just as unbearable as the When confronted with the facts, L Tripathi, state health minister said: amazing. If there is any truth in these c it will be my first duty to punish the cul

Excuses: There are discernible att at cover-ups in the department. In the case files, for instance, the term 'ble P-R' (bleeding per rectum) is generall mentioned. Instead, only its treatment i scribed. Accused Mala Moitra, a patien fering from radiation reaction: "The d at the hospital have asked me not t about my ailment with outsiders."

Worse still, instead of righting w the doctors are making excuses. Sahn instance, argued that the deep ulcerati the rectum, vagina and the urinary o noticed among many of the irradiate tients, might as well have been caused b rasites. "Even piles cannot be ruled ou cause of the rectal bleeding," she said. cannot, but it is also a fact that the sam tients have been treated at the institu radiation injury and not for wounds c by parasites or for piles.

Patients still flock to the departme cause it charges only a nominal Rs treatment, and accompanying relativ the patients are put up cheaply in Vara Nor is alternative treatment available n except at great expense. "It's a slaughte se," fumed Sharma, "but here you use ma-rays instead of the butcher's knife.

—SUMIT MITRA in Va

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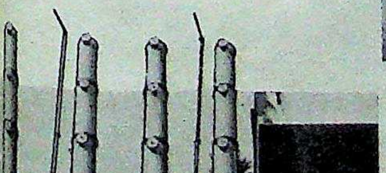

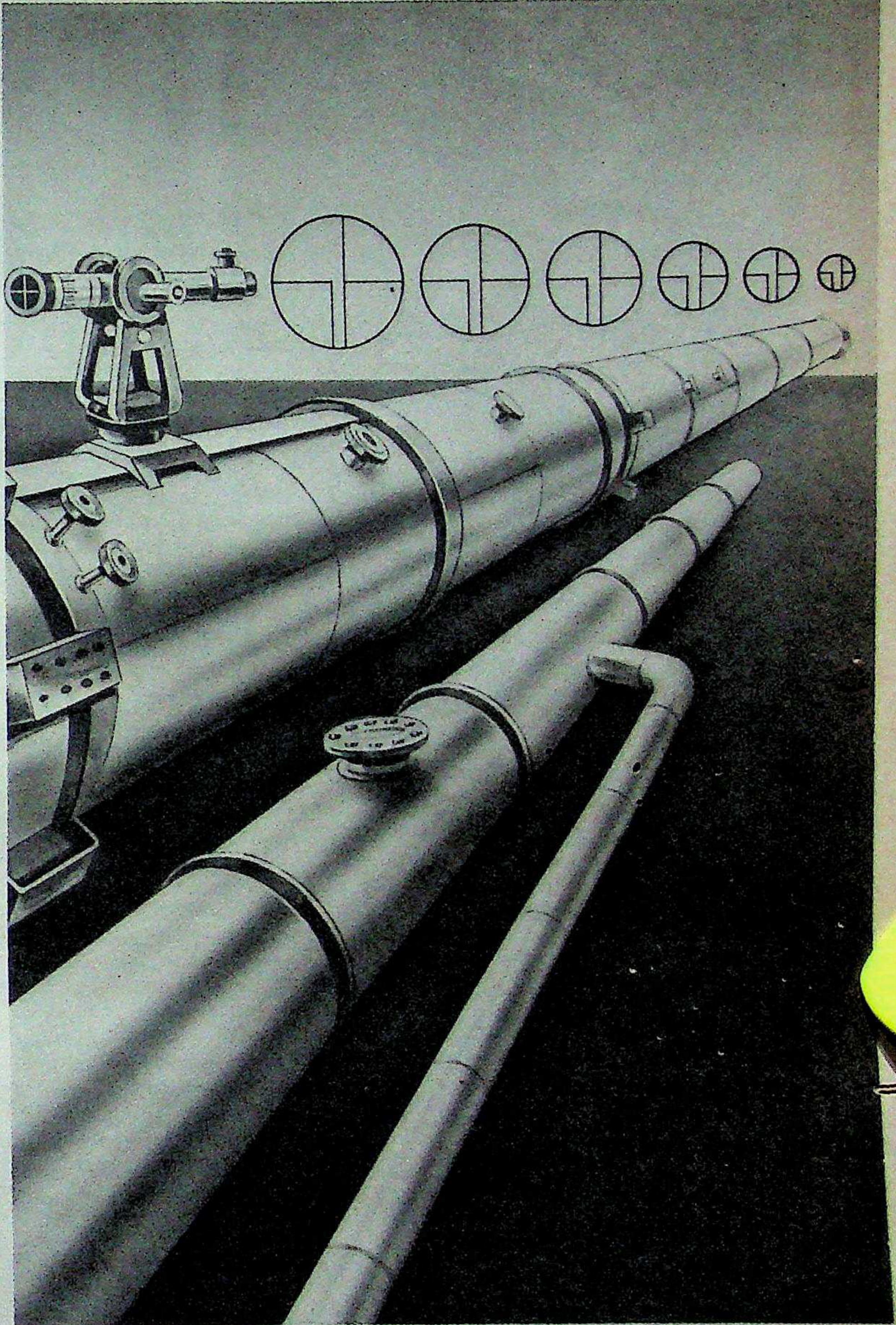

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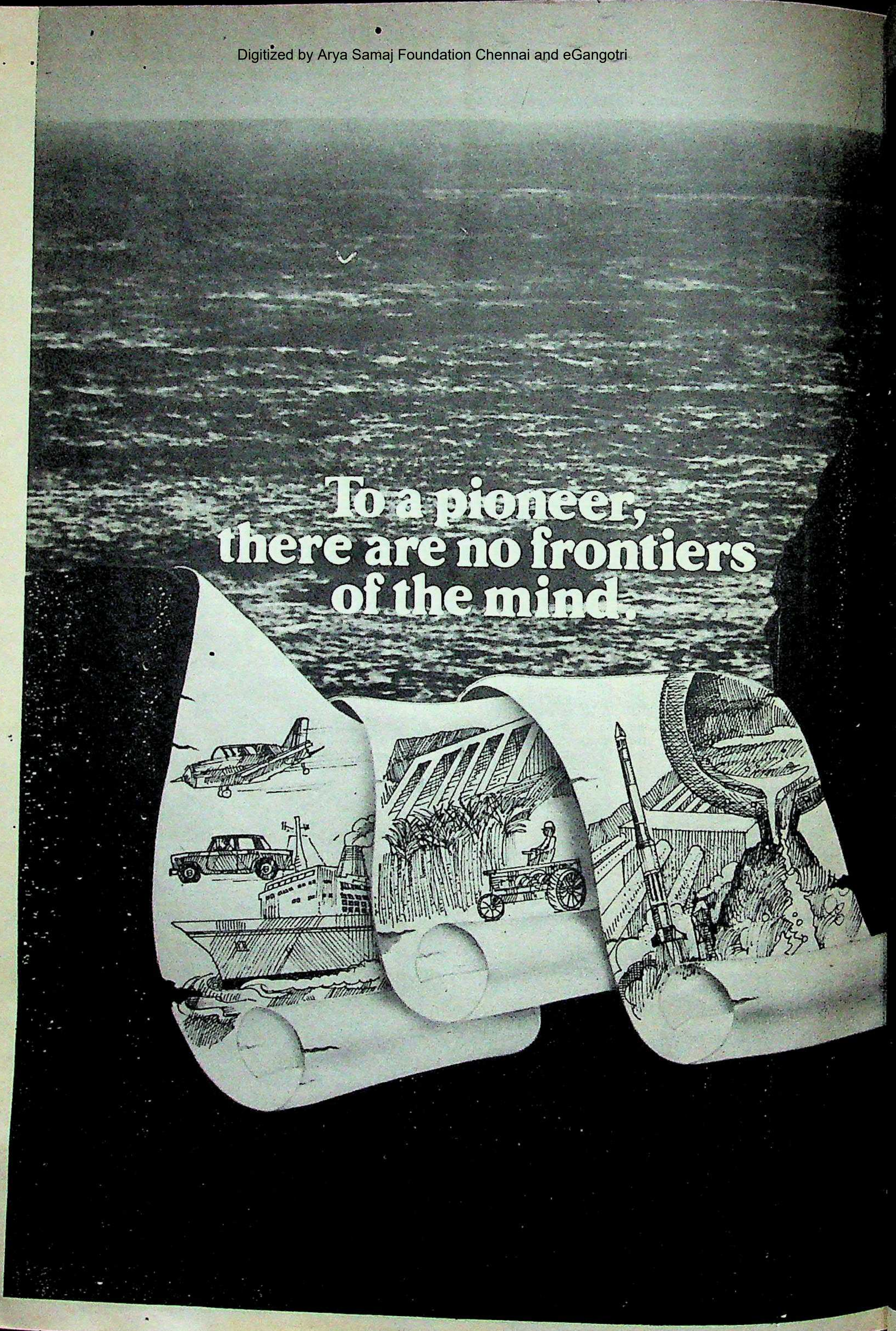
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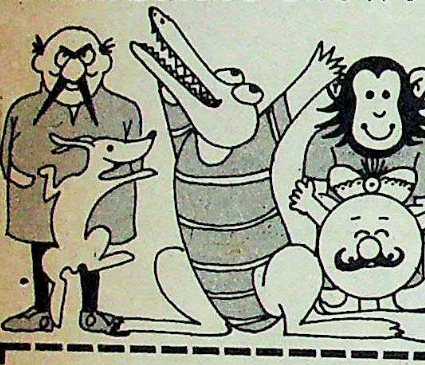

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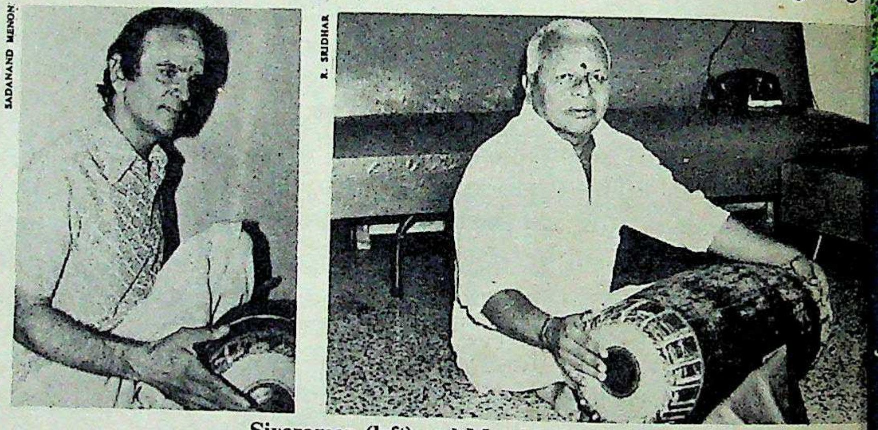
MUSIC

War Drums

PERSONALITY conflicts especially in the artistic field can often be acrimonious. And when there is little to choose between two artistes who have been equally illustrious fixtures on stage for a number of years, sparks fly. For the last few years, two mridangam players have vied for the number one position in their field. Last fortnight, the conflict between T.K. Murthy and Umayapuram K. Sivaraman boiled over into a major controversy when the latter won the lead musical part in a Tamil film starring Sivaji Ganesan as a mridangam player.

The controversy began with the search for eminent mridangists to play the music for *Mridanga Chakravarthi*, a Tamil film in which there is a mridangam competition between Suchindram Subbiah Pillai (being played by matinee idol Sivaji Ganesan) and his son Kanan (being played by Sivaji's own son, Prabu). In the film, Sivaji emerges victorious. Since the producers, Bhairavi Films, wanted the competition in the film to be a real clash of super-talents, it was necessary to find the most competent mridangists to play the actual music. Finding the two mridangists was not such a difficult task. The problem lay in deciding which of them would play the victor's music. Indirectly, it implied who was the better musician.



SADANAND MENON

R. SRIDHAR

Sivaraman (left) and Murthy: clash of egos

Initially, the producers, Kalaignanam and T.N. Venkatraman took recordings of earlier mridangam performances from both Murthy, 60, and Sivaraman, 47, to decide which one would best suit the Sivaji role.

Brewing Controversy: An uneasy suspense prevailed until the last week of February when the popular Tamil weekly *Ananda Vikatan* (February 27, 1983) brought out an article on the film, categorically stating that Sivaraman was to play the mridangam for Sivaji and Murthy for Prabu. At the time, Murthy maintained an air of nonchalance. "Subsequently I ran in
laignanam, who assured me I was sch
to play the mridangam for Sivaji, a
the magazine report was totally wro
even wanted to ascertain my conveni
fix suitable recording dates during t
fortnight of March," said Murthy.
later that he received the real news.
was the last I saw of Kalaignanam," h
led, "I was away on a concert tou
March 4–14. When I came back, I lear
the recording had already been compl
March 5 and 6, with Umayapuram S
man playing the mridangam for Siv
Madurai Srinivasan, an All India
(AIR) artiste catering to Prabu's role.

Sivaraman, on the other hand,
that he was the one originally book
Sivaji's role in the film. "Kalaig
approached me way back in Decembe
I gave him cassettes of some of my
mances and he lost no time in getting
me to confirm my playing the mridanga
Sivaji Ganesan. I was also told that M
was one of the names being considered
the mridangist for Prabu. However, aft
February 27 issue of *Ananda Vikatan* h
stands, the producers told me that M
was not in, and I was given a *carte blanc*
fix the other mridangist. I en
Guruvayur Doarai, who didn't fin
recording dates suitable. Then the prod
themselves fixed AIR's Madurai Sriniva

The producers further complicat
story with their own version of what h
ned. They insist that originally, n
Murthy nor Sivaraman was booked fo
particular role. "The problem with
thy," they say, "was that he was agreea
play only for Sivaji, and implicitly i
competition scene."

The producers have a point, but
they entered into written agreements
the mridangists to begin with, the contr
sy could have been avoided. It will ta
concerted effort to reinject harmony
the scene.

S.H. VENKATRA

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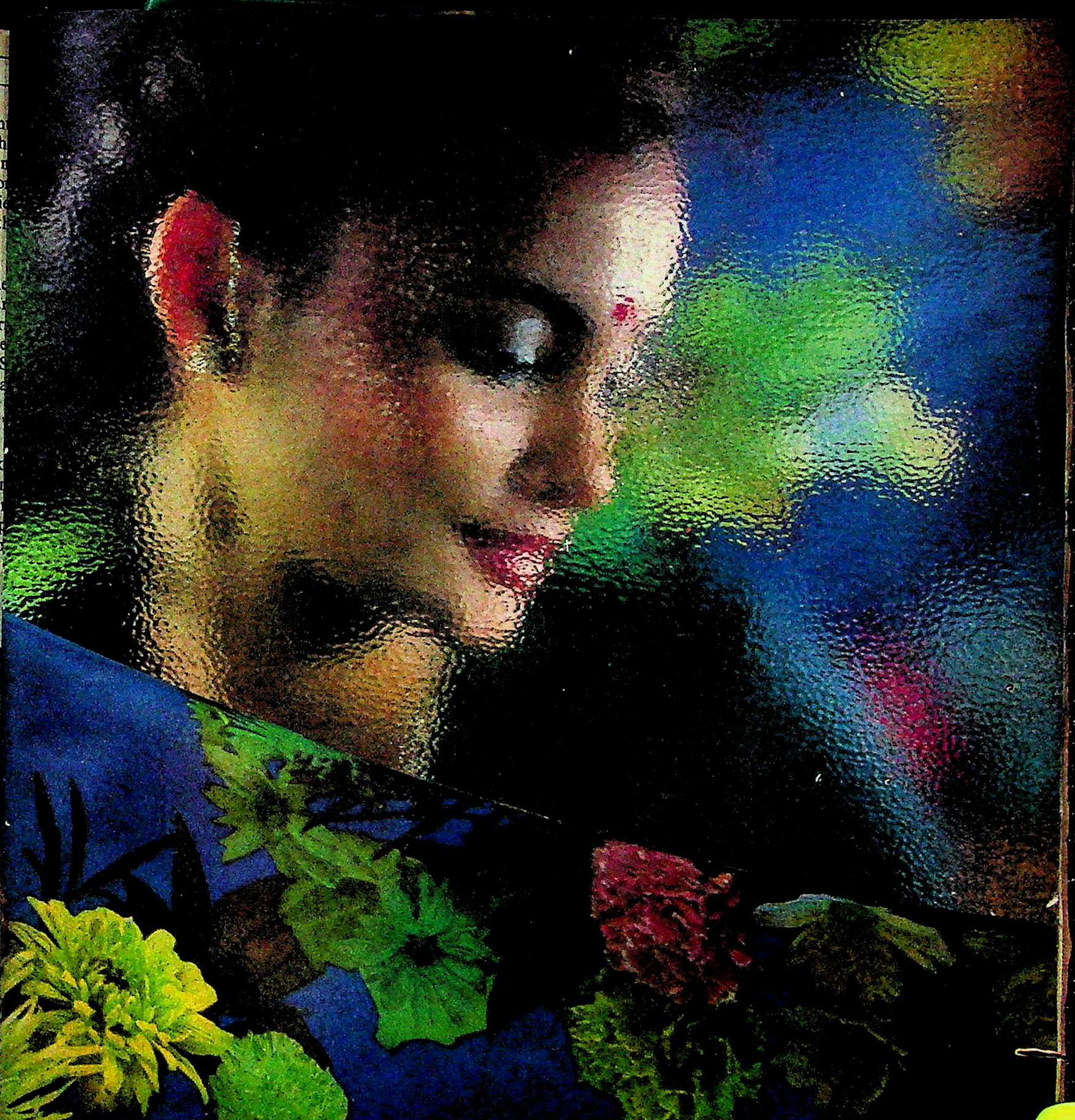

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Masala Dose

KAANOON

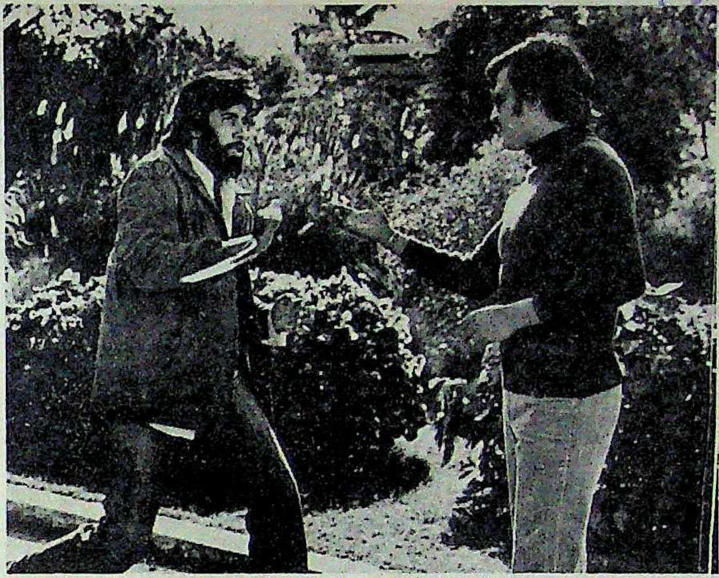
lmitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini, Reena havi and Pran Productions (Mad- oducer: A Poorna- Rao; Director: T.); Music: Laxmikant

AST, the search for a rthy successor to mitabh Bachchan is o it seems. Rajnikant, ready known as the of the south because es he plays in Tamil akes an impressive *Andhaa Kaanoon*. He lines with effortless has a rugged charm and there is a certain nformality about his ting. Only, he has to learn a thing out voice modulation. It is clear kant is here to stay on the Hindi

aa Kaanoon (Blind Law) is what masala film. It has violence, in- , revenge, thrills, good photogra- direction. The potion is, like the rew, deadly. The story is too com- bother about. Suffice it to say that ut the law being an ass. It's about a girl who witness the murder of r and the rape and killing of their hree hardened criminals. The law me to their rescue because the cor- says that the criminals were in ell at the time of the crime.

boy grows up as Rajnikant and venge the deaths by killing the e girl becomes a police official lini) to bring the culprits to book. lini, assisted by a sympathetic missioner and two bumbling poli- ha and Asrani), gets nowhere. But succeeds in his mission: he bumps e villains (Pran, Prem Chopra and nzongpa) in such a way that the t nab him.

ge: In each case, he rings up his s him who he is and promises to the next hour. He takes Prem a busy thoroughfare in the dark, way his thick glasses without s virtually blind, and asks him to the road before counting ten. rushed to death by speeding vehi- y, who has the disgusting habit of cigar ash in his whisky, is forced at gunpoint to drink, drink, drink and drown himself in his own bath-tub.



Bachchan and Rajnikant: passing the mantle?

Pran, a shameless debauch in a red wig who is seen in bed with a different wench in each scene, is shot dead by Rajnikant just when he is getting ready to criminally assault Hema Malini. Ironically, he uses the lady police officer's pistol. The law can't get him for the first two killings. The court rejects Hema Malini's evidence that she was witness to Pran's murder; the policemen who keep watch on Rajnikant in jail insist he was in his cell at the time of murder—the same argument on which the three criminals got away with the murder of Rajnikant's father and sister. So, he has the last laugh.

This in itself is material for a full-length film. But it looks as though the producer wasn't sure how the Hindi film audiences will take to Rajnikant. So, enter Amitabh Bachchan. An honest forest officer, he is falsely implicated in a murder case involving a corrupt forest contractor and is jailed for 20 years. While in jail, his pretty wife (played by Madhavi, a dusky and doe-eyed beauty from Andhra Pradesh) is dishonoured by four unknown goondas. Unable to bear the shame, she throttles her little daughter to death and commits suicide. Ten years later, Bachchan is released. Lonely and embittered, he roams about aimlessly and sleeps on public paths. One day, he unexpectedly runs into Amrish Puri, the forest contractor who is responsible for his miseries. Puri had Bachchan jailed on the charge that the latter had killed him and escapes to begin life as a flourishing politician. Bachchan now catches up with him.

Legal Twist: In a stunning sequence rarely seen since *Sholay* and *Aakrosh*, Bachchan chases Puri for several furlongs from a political meeting to a crowded courtroom, grabs a long, sharp knife from a passer-by along the way and stabs him to death in full view of the judge, lawyers and all. It was the same judge who had jailed him earlier for supposedly killing Puri. He now tells the horrified judge: "You punished me for a crime I did not commit. I have killed this man because he has ruined my life. Surely, you can't punish me a second time for the same crime?"

The film, certified for adult viewing, is the remake of a story that has already been filmed in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada and now is being made in Malayalam. Bachchan, who reportedly charged Rs.1 lakh a day for working in this film, appears content playing a secondary role. His performance in the court scene is one of the most gripping and memorable on the Hindi screen. He shows his flair for comedy in a song sequence in which he cajoles his wife in vain to plant a kiss on his cheek.

Malini: unconventional role

Agha and Asrani, who are supposed to provide comic relief by acting like stupid policemen, are hardly funny. Hema Malini looks different in a police officer's uniform. But her performance is less than convincing. Thanks to the lady, Agha and Asrani, the police emerge as a thoroughly incompetent, useless, corrupt and helpless force.

This heady cocktail of a film is bound to be a blockbuster. It could have done equally well with less violence, fewer rapes and bedroom scenes. But then as the film conclusively proves the law is an ass.

—S. VENKAT NARAYAN

ELEPHANT POLO

Trunk In Cheek

Dear Aroon,

Sorry for not being there in person to give you a Tiger Tops piece but as you'll see from this letter, I was overtaken by events quite beyond my control. Before you ask me to foot the bill for not producing a story let me tell you what exactly happened in the Royal Chitwan National Park of Nepal.

As you remember, we originally thought I was going to cover a high-stakes polo tournament featuring top international teams for the sports pages. I was a bit puzzled on arriving here to discover that the names of the teams pinned up on the board were rather unfamiliar. I'm sure you've never heard of "Hannibal's Own", "Gurkha Gladiators," "Pan Am Jumbos", "Tiger Tops Tuskers", "Rajasthan Ramblers" or "Edward Horsewell's Regulars".

I was even more puzzled when I heard trumpeting sounds from the stables but since the hospitality here was rather elaborate and spirited, I thought nothing of it. I really should have caught the first yak back when, in the sober light of day, the mounts that were to be used for the tournament lumbered into view.

When my journalistic instincts overcame my incredulity, I went sniffing around with notebook and pen to get the background stuff before the matches started (Have you ever tried sniffing around 12 elephants?); The experts were not very illuminating either. Major Jack Keen, a very pucka bloke from Blighty representing Hannibal's Own, gave me my first usable quote: "The first rule of elephant polo is that there are no rules," he mumbled through his handlebars. However, a few investigative pink gins later, I discovered he was exaggerating.

As far as I could perceive, there were two definite rules. Players were allowed to strike the elephants with their long-handled sticks as much as they wanted to—and some got pretty adept at this inspiring me to write myself a reminder to use the phrase "pachydermic patience" in the story. They were not, however, permitted to strike opposing players though there were some pretty close shaves. In fact, Digvijay Singh, the most enthusiastic member of the Rajasthan Ramblers (the name was changed to Rajasthan Rowdies after the first "jungli" night) came perilously close to decapitating two opposing players during his 5 kmph charge towards the goal uttering blood-curdling war cries.

The other unspoken rule was that in order to play the game players were meant to strike the ball with their sticks. You would have been amazed at the number who failed to observe this rule and the cries of "foul" really referred to the mounds of droppings that played hell with well-planned moves.

I must admit that often it wasn't really the fault of the players that form and predictions went awry with monumental regularity. Horsewell's Regulars, smartly turned out in white jodhpurs, wiped out favourites Rajasthan Rowdies the first day only to fall victim to some mysterious jungle disease later that night. I thought I had my first piece of sensationalism when dark suspicions were being muttered behind the stables of the Indians having spiked their drinks. Whatever the cause, the damage was done. "I can't bear to look," moaned Mrs George Clowes, wife of a team member, when the next day's play resumed. "Edward is seeing five balls and the others aren't seeing any."

Maybe the organisers should have used a larger ball. But as Jim Edwards, of Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge, one of the organisers confided to me, "We tried using footballs last year but the elephants just couldn't resist popping them underfoot like balloons." The other problem was that the damned ball kept getting lost in a thicket of elephant legs while the mahouts, who thought the whole affair was a huge joke (no pun intended) were under the mistaken impression that the objective was to pile one elephant on top of another. The only goals that were scored came when a player managed to hit the ball a few yards which usually gave him a clear lumber(?) to the opposing goal.

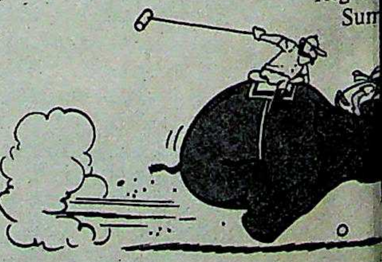
The most interesting story I got was the auction of the teams the rather inebriated night before the tournament started. The process was fairly simple. Each team was auctioned off to a buyer from among the audience, some of whom were incredibly generous with their assets. Gail Adleson, whose company, Lorimar, owns the most successful television serial in history, "Dallas", offered to pay for a one-week holiday at an exclusive country club in Los Angeles, to the owner of the winning team. Pan Am, co-sponsors of the tournament, chipped in with a round trip first-class ticket to Los Angeles. Holidays in Japan and Saudi Arabia (I double-checked this one) were also among the offers while the Gurkhas generously offered a week's stay at their Sangma Ridge retreat to the team that came last (Guess who lumbered home last—the Gurkhas)! And photographer Don McCullin, offered his won prize: a complimentary photograph on any
for the winner.

The home team (Tiger Tc
Tuskers) was auctioned for the highe
£1,000 since it was generally felt th
knew the terrain, the elephants and
converse with the mahouts. The Indi
fetched £700 because, as auctioneer
Wright of *The Sunday Times* annou
"they were rumoured to have playe
game before". The Brits, true to tr
paid up £250 and bought themselve
the Pan Am lot went for a paltry £3
Scottish team, also true to tradition
their bid by offering Rs 10 for themse
finally went for a fairly respectable

Four days later, the Tusk
justified their seeding by winning th
tournament. England and Scotland,
display of solidarity came joint thir
the Pan Am Jumbos wound up a cr
second. Unfortunately, I wasn't the
witness the epic end. Two days of p
corks till the early morning hours is
guaranteed to paralyse your typing
and cloud the memory. I asked som
drinking beer at 7 a.m. wasn't overd
bit. "Not if you're playing polo," h
over his shoulder before rushing off
and identify his elephant.

And, even if I wasn't actu
playing (though I was sorely tempte
the prizes were being announced) o
tend to get involved in the general
professionally speaking, of course. B
elephant polo is a sport where most
activity takes place off the field, I th
there really wasn't a story in it for a
newsmagazine. I could, if you like, c
with a think piece on "The Cementi
of Sport in International Relations"
you really want a sports story, I cou
next year: the tournament's well on
to becoming an annual event. For the
moment, all I have are the snapshots.
Whatever you decide, don't call me to
early—I don't have to cover an eleph
polo match in the morning.

Regard
Sum



Editor's noting
SD. Sorry to hear there's no story bu
see what Sunday Times, *Tatler and the*
BBC *do before I decide who pays for yo*
vacation?

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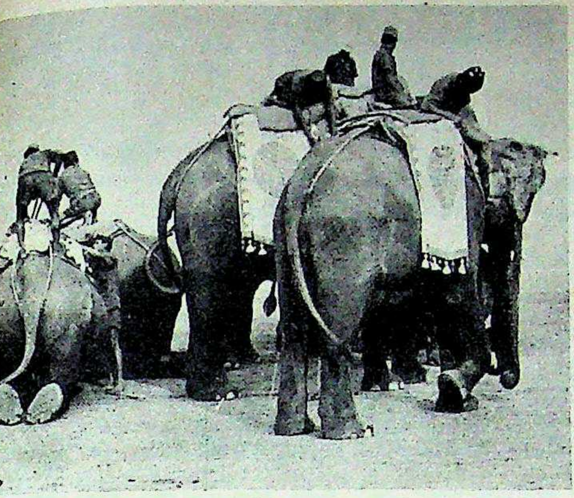
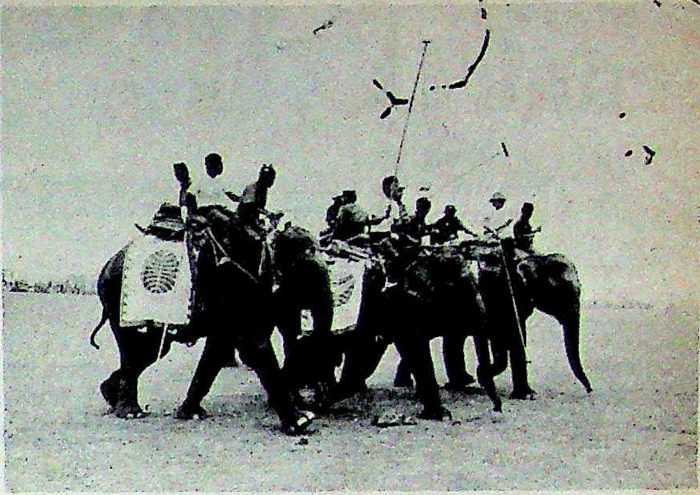
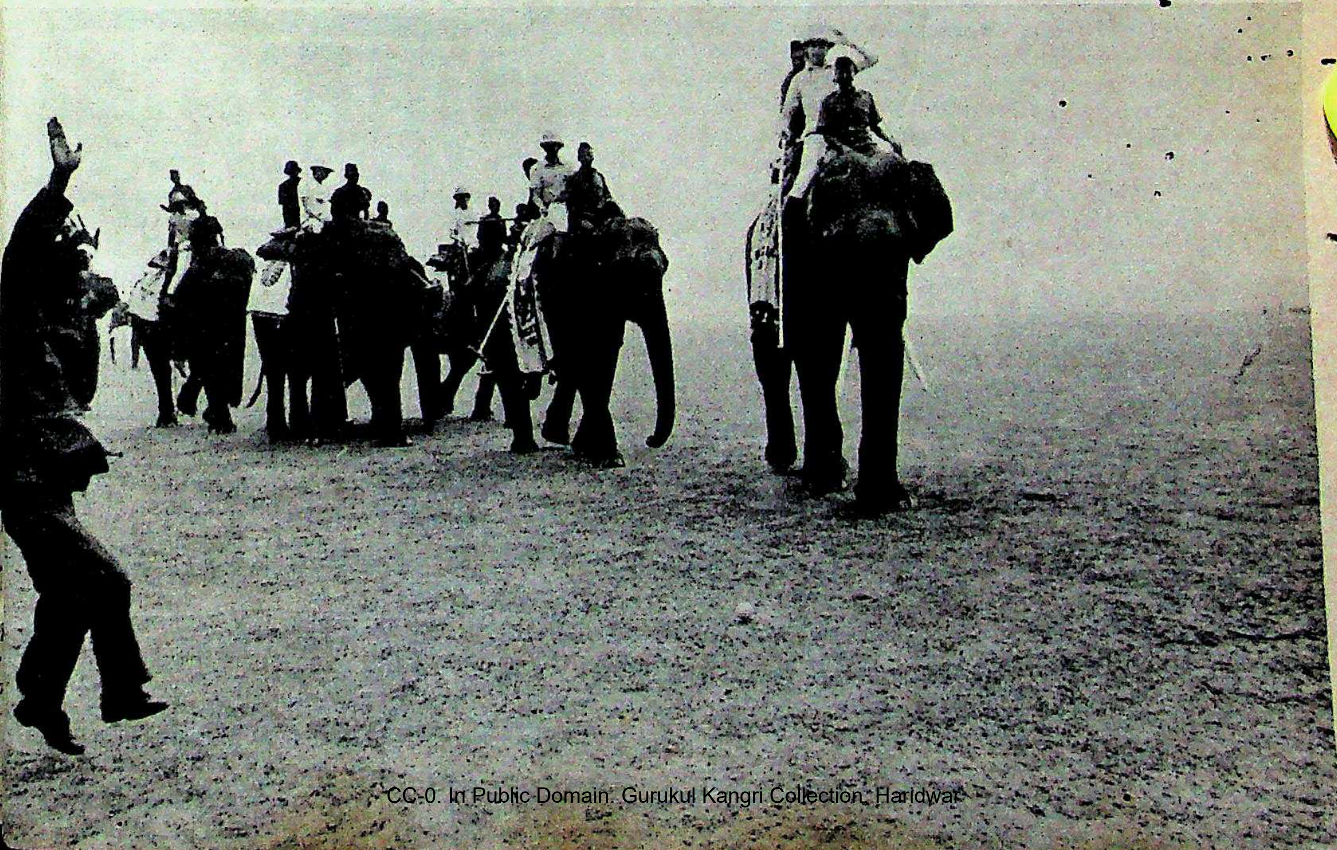


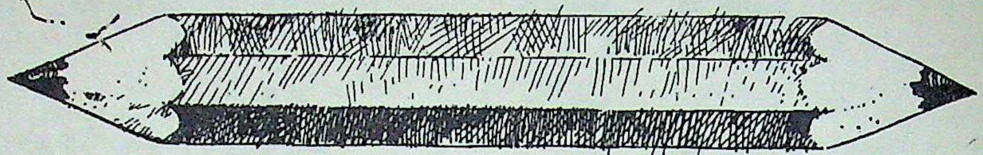


ONE TIGER TOPS NUMBER ONE TEAM 1983
BER TWO
83

Elephants being readied for the tournament (top, left); teams race for the ball (top, right); the Rajasthan Ramblers (above); winners Tiger Tops Tuskers score (below)



COMMUNICATION IS A TWO WAY STREET



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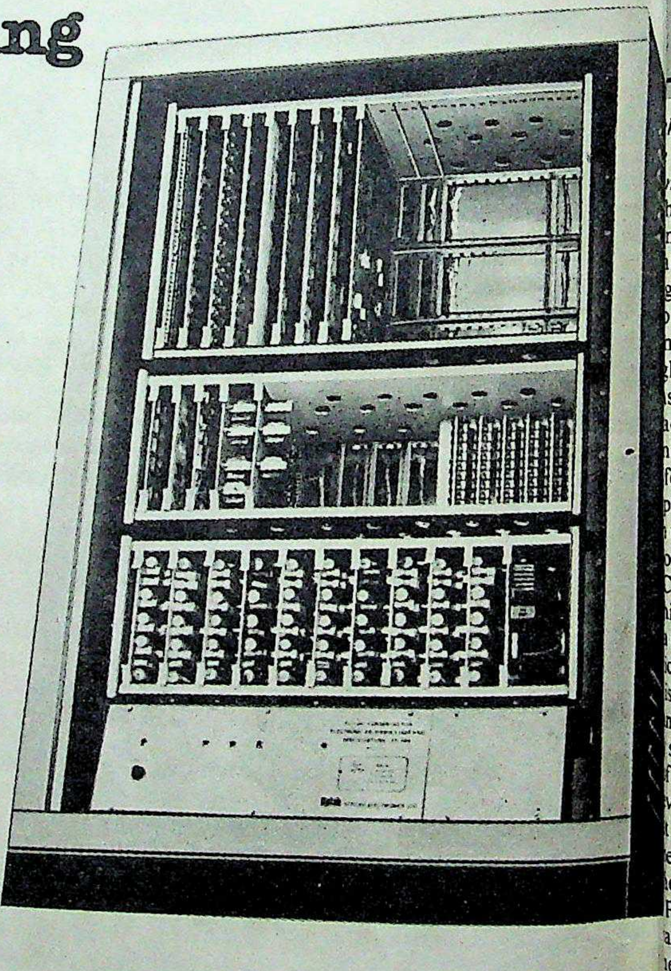

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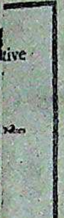

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OVATIVE BANKER
-His Life and Times
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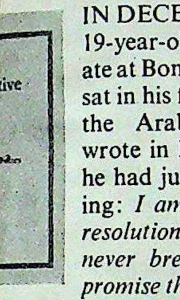

IN DECEMBER 1940, a 19-year-old under-graduate at Bombay University sat in his flat overlooking the Arabian Sea and wrote in his diary which he had just started keeping: *I am making a last resolution which I shall never break. I solemnly promise that I would never* *hing in my life, be it energy or time,* *everything that makes life to the* *mankind.*

her Swami Vivekananda in the n a manner of speaking, yes, but in lly different from Vivekananda's. g man was Tonse Anant Pai, or you and me, and this theme—not ything, whether time or energy— h nearly everything he did later in s a banker, then as an insurance dministrator and finally a Union inister. It was in many ways an fe for a boy from Udupi, a small pt town near Mangalore; but then unusual man and he made it from ofed house in Udupi to the teak- Cabinet room in South Block in i in 27 months flat, the fastest man who was not really cut out to cian.

s as much Pai's story as the story nk—Syndicate Bank—which the started on a shoestring and made f the country's top 10 banks. It is ver, one of those heavy 'official' read like government reports and e puts down after ploughing e first paragraph. M.V. Kamath, Pai's schoolmate and shares the al background, writes about the ew so intimately with feeling and but without slurring over those Pai's personality that ultimately his political career and brought his ntimely end. Pai had just turned 60 ied.

Beginnings: The bank which ke the Pai family's fortunes and e leverage for T.A. Pai's take-off s was founded, if that is the right han 60 years ago in a single room adjoining the family shop in Udupi. None of the three founder-directors knew the first thing about banking. One was an insurance agent, another a transport manager, and the third a country doctor. The issued share capital was Rs 1 lakh but it took the promoters more than five years to collect it from their friends.

When the bank opened, it had only one employee and even when more staff were recruited, salaries were unheard of. After four years in business, the paid-up capital was less than Rs 14,000 and reserves Rs 1,000—peanuts, as Kamath says, in today's parlance. But T.A. Pai's uncle, Madhav Pai, was something more than a country doctor. He was a character straight out of Dickens who knew everyone in his small community from the local fisherwoman with a drunkard husband to the temple priest with too many children.

Madhav Pai was running more than a bank: he was a one-man rural development agency. People came to his dispensary with annas and pies and also their headaches and pregnancies and he doled out pills and potions to his patients as easily as he dealt with their finances. He took the bank literally to his customers' doors through runners who picked up deposits every evening—as small as two annas (12 paise)—and brought them to the bank. And the bank gave them loans of Rs 25 and Rs 50 when they were in trouble.

Years later, when the deposits had swollen into crores, T.A. Pai was called by a Reserve Bank official and asked: "Your bank has become so big. Why do you want to lend Rs 25 and Rs 50 and demean yourself?"

"We have grown big only by lending such small sums," said Pai, "why must we stop lending now?"

There was no reply.

Rapid Rise: As a young bank manager Pai came to know his territory so well that it was natural for him to use it as a stepping stone to politics. At 29, he became the youngest member of the Madras Legislative Assembly—his district was then part of the old Madras state—and came to know C. Subramaniam and others well. It was Subramaniam who brought him closer to the Congress establishment, first as chief of the Food Corporation of India and then as chairman of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). From LIC to the Central Cabinet as railway minister was a big jump but Pai had political connections—he was close to Dr A.V. Baliga of Bombay and Aruna Asaf Ali who were quite active behind the scene between 1969 and 1972, when the leftists rode high in Delhi.

Pai: an efficient technocrat

Pai was no leftist though he had friends among them; he was no hard-boiled politician either and had an unusually romantic view of politics; unusually, that is, for a hard-headed banker that he was. He was basically a manager, a man who gets things done, and 'getting things done' became an end in itself. Pai was far too unsophisticated to be able to manoeuvre through the minefield of Indian politics without getting hurt, and hurt he was in the end. When the Emergency came, Pai could not see through the smokescreen of phoney high-mindedness with which its apologists tried to explain it away. He seems to have been unhinged by it all and reduced to making speeches that read like gibberish:

> "It is indeed futile to talk in terms of certain denials when great issues are at stake. The issue was whether India will recover its ethos. The total situation today is one of renewed confidence backed by solid achievement and resurgence of hope....India is a free country, an open country and a democratic country."

How did a man as intelligent as Pai and so deeply rooted in the homespun values of his rural community suddenly lose his balance? There is an explanation though Kamath does not try it. A technocrat—and that is what Pai was—is at his most efficient when he functions within the framework of his technology. As a banker and as an administrator that is precisely what Pai did. But technology has no moral dimension so that when the technocrat begins to function outside his original frame of reference, he flounders and is lost. Pai justified the Emergency because according to him it was the most productive. This is the typical reaction of a manager, not a public man. Pai's tragedy is a warning to all those who are apt to place their faith in independent technocrats as the ultimate solution to all our problems. A truly independent technocrat is, almost by definition, an amoral man, and we have enough of them already among our politicians.

—JAY DUBASHI

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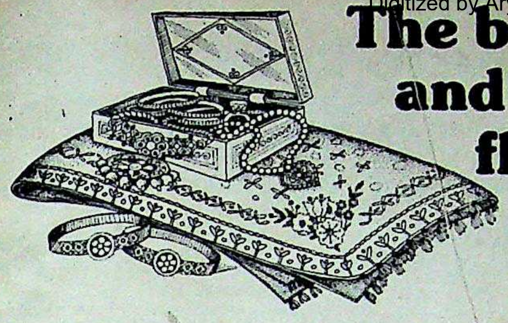

The bride and the flower wrap

The mother broke down. The father bit back his tears. Friends came to bid her adieu. The bride was on her way to her husband's home. And behind her palanquin, laden on carts, were boxes and boxes of a trousseau ......

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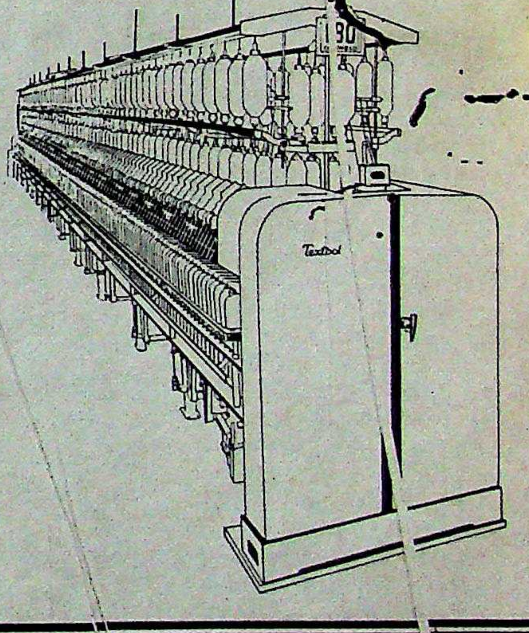

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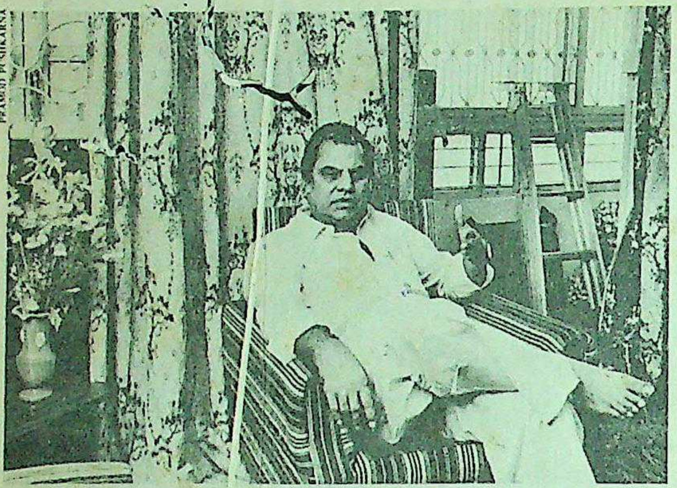


Antulay: back to court

■ Politicians are reputed to have skins thicker than rhinoceros hides. Especially someone like **Abdul Rehman Antulay,** the former chief minister of Maharashtra, who was chased out of office 1981 on corruption charges and has received more than his share of drubbing in the press. Well, apparently, he's had enough. Last fortnight, Antulay, acting in his capacity as the chairman of Konkan Unnati Mitra Mandal trust, slapped the staggeringly high damage suit on Bennet Coleman and Company, publishers of the *Times of India* chain, stating that he was "aggrieved" because of an article carried exactly a year ago.

After filing a letter to the Bombay High Court stating his case, Antulay dashed for the weekend to his country home at Ambet in the Konkan area, the development of which is the avowed aim of the said trust. S.N. Desai, fellow trustee and former minister, claimed that the letter could be filed only now because the newspaper group had "persistently refused" to carry out a "correction". On his part, Antulay made it in the nick of time. Had he waited a day more the suit would have been annulled under the law of limitation. Evidence of another shrewd manoeuvre by Antulay.

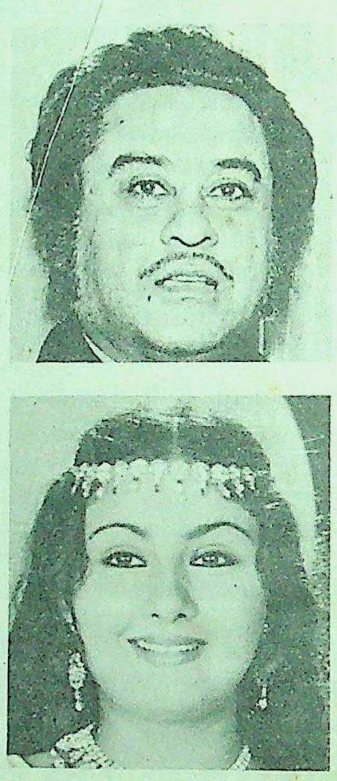
■ Government employees are generally accused of covering up things and not the other way round. But last fortnight, in what must be the most unusual protest in Delhi's history since the days of Raj Narain, 2,000 government employees brought traffic to an incredulous halt when they marched through the streets to Home Minister P. C. Sethi's house, clad in nothing more than their underwear. The reason for their naked display of defiance was their collective demand that they be given terrycotton uniforms in place of the cheap khadi drill that is standard issue.

If press "exposure" was what they were desiring, there could have been no better way. In the bargain, they managed to get plenty of other grievances off their chests as well as they strode down the elegant sweep of Rajpath in striped 'kuchchhas' of all colours and shapes. Even *The New York Times* was moved enough to cover the event, but whether the Government does the same is still to be seen.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Demonstrators at the '*kuchchha*' rally: naked defiance

■ He waltzed his way to fame in the '50s, playing the lovable loony in a host of song-and-dance-loaded films of the era. Then, with a bulging midriff slowing down his acrobatics, he took to singing, yodelling and screaming his way up to his perch at the top of the



Kishore (top) and Leena: a family plot

proved equally versatil women, marrying in c cession young starlets cades his junior. At 62 **Kumar** has launched a yet titled, where **Chandavarkar,** his t present wife, is cast aga **Kumar,** his son by marriage. The casting history, as no real-life yet been hugged by the on screen in a step- embrace. Kishore, wh the director, no doubt strictly family affair.

SIGN POST

■ **Awarded**: Eight Richard Attenboroug *Gandhi* in Los Ange film was adjudged Bes other awards includ Actor: Ben Kingsl Director: Attenborou Original Screenpla Briley; Best Cinemat Billy Williams and Taylor; Best Art Stuart Craig and Bob direction by Michael Best Costume Desi Mollo and Bhanu Ath Best Film editing: Jo

■ **Awarded:** To var nguished scholars, s soldiers and arti Republic Day awa away by President Among the promine winners were fil Richard Attenborou Bhalindra Singh General A.M. Sethn Bhushan), the Bha given posthumously Vinoba Bhave, the P to musician Kanwal

■ **Awarded:** To ren ronomist M.S. Swa at present the direc of the M International Rice Institute, the 1982 T prize.

■ **Died:** Gener Chaudhuri, 75, in He was chief of army November 20, 1962, 1966. Following his General Chaudhuri pointed Indian hig sioner in Canada.

Compiled
1999-2000